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Please direct correspondence to:
Association for Jewish Studies
Center for Jewish History
15 West 16th Street
New York, NY 10011

Voice: (917) 606-8249
Fax: (917) 606-8222
E-Mail: ajs@ajs.cjh.org
Web Site: www.ajsnet.org

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From the Editors

Dear Colleagues,

Translation, in the technical sense of the term, originally referred to the removal of relics from one location to another. It describes a physical process by which material remains transition from holy space to holy space. Much of what is essential—dare we say holy—in Judaism is rooted in the textual, and thus is bound inextricably to language. But “translation” in Judaism is far from exclusively concerned with Scripture; Judaism and Jews’ understanding of their Jewishness transformed time and again as the people migrated from place to place, from society to society, over the millennia.

One could argue that the very origins of Judaism lie in translation and language: in the transformation of the Israelites into the Jews during the Babylonian Exile, and the flourishing of an Egyptian Diaspora, as well. The Persian and Hellenistic periods witnessed tremendous cultural transformations of Judaism, and these transformations marked themselves in language: in the apparent need to translate the Torah, as recorded in Nehemiah 8 (perhaps the earliest mention of an Aramaic targum) and in the creation of the Greek Septuagint. The process of textual translation has been ongoing ever since, as communities navigated the imperative power of the Divine Word, yoked inextricably to the divine language (Hebrew) and the need and desire to understand those words in the vernacular. Translation affords the translator an opportunity to synthesize Holy Writ with his or her idea of holiness. Each translation—literal or metaphorical—makes a statement about alienation and ownership, estrangement and identity.

Of course, much of both Judaism and Jewish life beyond the text was translated over the centuries, and the metaphor of translation allows us to think about Judaism and Jewishness in all their rich and complicated manifestations over the last two thousand years and across the globe. Indeed, the ubiquity of translation as a motif throughout

Jewish history means that everyone involved in Jewish Studies must constantly confront issues that relate to this idea: we teach in texts written in other languages (often limited by the quality of translations available), we construct curricula which may or may not recognize certain languages as “Jewish” (and thus eligible for Jewish Studies credit), and we work to close the gap between remote cultures and those of our modern students—cultural rather than linguistic translation.

The idea of “translation”—of carrying a legacy from the old realm into the new—provides a fitting theme for our entry into our new role as editors of *AJS Perspectives*, and we are delighted to share with you the rich reflections on the subject by our colleagues. The essays in this issue span from antiquity to the twenty-first century, from the Caribbean to Iran, and for all their scope only scratch the surface of this vast topic. The questionnaire, in turn, takes a pragmatic approach to the subject, and presents an array of creative curricular responses to the challenges presented by a religious and cultural tradition that can easily seem to require tremendous linguistic versatility in a time when the humanities generally and languages in particular are increasingly pressed to justify themselves.

As we mark the transition—translation!—from the dynamic and creative editorial leadership of Matti Bunzl and Rachel Havrelock, we are delighted to share these essays with you, and hope that this issue will inspire conversations at both coffeemakers and conferences.

Jonathan M. Hess

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Laura Lieber

Duke University

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From the President

Dear Colleagues,

I spent this past summer in Jerusalem, writing a report for the National Library of Israel (NLI) concerning its holdings in American Jewish Studies. I was not alone. Lots of AJS members seem to spend portions of their summer at the National Library. Some first knew it as the Jewish National and University Library, part of the Hebrew University, but since 2008 it has become a government-recognized semi-independent institution, eventually to be housed in a new state-of-the-art building near the Knesset. In the interim, the library's fabled Judaica Reading Room remains where it was, filled with scholars from around the world devotedly engaged in research.

What is it about the NLI that makes it so alluring? First and foremost, of course, the size and depth of the collection draw scholars to it. The Judaica collection is especially comprehensive, embracing works not only in Hebrew and English, but in all major languages. While there are rival collections across North America, most of them, like the collection at my university, are restricted in one way or another. The NLI, by contrast, is open to the general public. All are welcome to use it.

In addition, the Judaica Reading Room contains a large collection of books and periodicals conveniently available on nearby shelves for reference and browsing. This makes research particularly efficient.

In recent years, the library has also striven to become user-friendly. The difficult-to-use order slips that patrons laboriously used to have to fill out by hand ("please write clearly," librarians implored) have been mercifully retired. Most books are now easily ordered with the click of a mouse straight from the online catalog. Ornerly staff members seem to have been retired as well. The library is full of young and enthusiastic staff people, eager to be helpful.

Finally, what draws many people to the Judaica Reference Room is the fact that it is filled with a diversity of scholars from around the world. Have a question? There is always some great expert off in a corner with whom one can consult. Want to talk about an idea? There is inevitably a group of scholars eager to listen and respond—vehemently. Many a monograph owes its origins to a stimulating conversation in the NLI hallways.

The atmosphere of the Judaica Reference Room was not always as welcoming as it is today. An eye-opening pamphlet by Professor Moshe Rosman, entitled *From Knowledge Culture to Discourse Culture: The Changing Mission of Judaica Libraries*, recalls an earlier era when Israel's library, like so many of its counterparts around the world, was an elite haven principally reserved for scholars. Cultural "philistines," were effectively barred, Rosman writes. "Only someone who had acquired the requisite cultural key, only a member of the club, only a worker of good standing in the scholarly union, could walk through."

Today, research at the Judaica Reference Room and throughout the NLI has been thoroughly democratized. The library is open to all, and—much like the Library of Congress—it offers patrons a great many resources online.

The new NLI mission statement reflects this transformed ethos:

In addition to collection and preservation, the NLI seeks to become the country's flagship of state-of-the-art information technology, offering open, democratic access to the vast world of physical and digital resources, tools, and services, not only those based on the Library's own holdings and trained personnel but also the almost limitless resources available through collaborative arrangements with other libraries and repositories of knowledge.

The key phrase is "open, democratic access." Sitting in the NLI, I could not help but contrast this pledge with the reality of most Jewish libraries across North America. Instead of being freely open to all, most of our libraries are closed to outsiders. Even if they extend "library privileges"—a telling phrase—to short-term visitors with bona fide scholarly credentials, "open democratic access" is utterly alien to their mission. They cater to much more limited constituencies and expect outsiders who seek regular access to their collections to pay handsomely for the "privilege."

The field of Jewish Studies suffers from the fact that so many great Jewish libraries are closed to outsiders. Graduate students, emeriti, and independent scholars suffer the most, but even many of our members with regular academic appointments lack regular access to first-class Jewish library collections. The premier collections of Jewish books in North America—a few notable exceptions notwithstanding, including the Center for Jewish History—effectively lie behind paywalls.

The high cost of maintaining a comprehensive Judaica collection, complex rules set by suppliers of library content like ProQuest and EBSCO, and long traditions of academic elitism ("Philistines are barred") make it unlikely that a modern-day Joshua will tear these walls down anytime soon. If anything, the walls are growing higher and higher. Some libraries, in recent years, have gone so far as to place even their online catalogues behind paywalls.

In light of these unhappy trends, the move to "open democratic access" adopted by the National Library of Israel bears careful watching. Will it promote learning, scholarship, and a more democratic ethos? Will it transform NLI into the central library for Jews and students of Judaism around the world? Should AJS partner in some way with NLI for the benefit of our members? Judging from the crowds in the Judaica Reference Room this summer, a great many library patrons, AJS members among them, have already voted with their feet.

Jonathan D. Sarna
Brandeis University

From the Executive Director

Dear Colleagues,

How someone gets on the AJS Board of Directors seems to be, unintentionally, one of the best kept secrets. AJS recently appointed a governance committee, chaired by Robin Judd and including Judith Baskin, David Freidenreich, and Joel Berkowitz, charged with, among many tasks, examining the AJS board nominations process and ensuring greater transparency. Although the board election system is outlined in the AJS bylaws, available at www.ajsnet.org/bylaws.htm, this webpage is not exactly setting Google Analytics records. I thus hope this column will demystify the board election process, and encourage more people to get involved.

AJS's Board of Directors (www.ajsnet.org/board.htm) consists of five officers (president, vice president for membership, vice president for program, vice president for publications, and secretary/treasurer) and eighteen regular directors. In addition, the past two presidents sit on the board, as do the editors of *Perspectives* and *AJS Review* (ex officio). Regular director terms are three years; officer terms are two years. As noted in Article IV, Section 3 of the AJS bylaws the board is charged with the general direction, management, and control of AJS. On a practical level, this means oversight of AJS's projects, mission, and finances.

Each December, AJS's president submits to the board for approval the names of seven people to serve on the nominating committee, which is charged with creating a slate of board nominees. The 2015 nominating committee consists of: Beth Berkowitz, Sara Horowitz (chair), Charles Manekin, David Myers, Shachar Pinsker, Riv-Ellen Prell, and Steve Weitzman. They were selected for the breadth of fields and regions they represent, their leadership experience, as well as their first-hand knowledge of AJS board and committee work.

The committee next seeks suggestions of director nominees by reaching out to various constituencies, including the heads of divisions, caucuses, standing committees, and editorial boards, as well as current board members. These leaders are reminded that the AJS board strives to reflect the diversity of the field of Jewish Studies with respect to discipline, region, type of institution, stage of career,

and gender. Suggested nominees' familiarity with AJS—through regular attendance at its conferences, involvement in publications, or other undertakings—is also very important, as well as people's desire to be further involved in AJS and their leadership role at their home institutions or other organizations. AJS welcomes as nominees professors as well as scholars who work both within and outside of academia (i.e. in museums, archives, historical societies, libraries, nonprofits, etc.). Eligibility to serve on the executive committee is a bit narrower, requiring current or past service on the board or program committee, or as a division chair or editor of an AJS publication. In order to be eligible for the presidency, someone must either currently be an officer, or have served as an officer within the previous four years.

The nominating committee spends several weeks over the spring and summer developing a list of potential nominees. Once that list is finalized and the individuals agree to join the slate, the list is shared with the president of AJS and, finally, with the full membership, a month ahead of the annual conference. The chair of the committee formally presents the slate at the annual business meeting, this year to be held December 13 at 1:15 pm at the Sheraton Boston. Election is by majority vote of the members present at the business meeting.

So what do you do if you are interested in serving on the AJS board? Get involved: contact the AJS office or an officer about your interest in serving on a committee or an editorial board, as a division chair or a volunteer in some other capacity. Board service is as much about excellence in scholarship as it is about having administrative, program-building, fundraising, and other such experience that can help AJS grow. Also be on the lookout for communication about new ways AJS seeks to involve members in the nominations process. As always, I welcome your thoughts. Please feel free to contact me at rsheramy@ajs.cjh.org.

Rona Sheramy
Association for Jewish Studies

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The Translation Issue

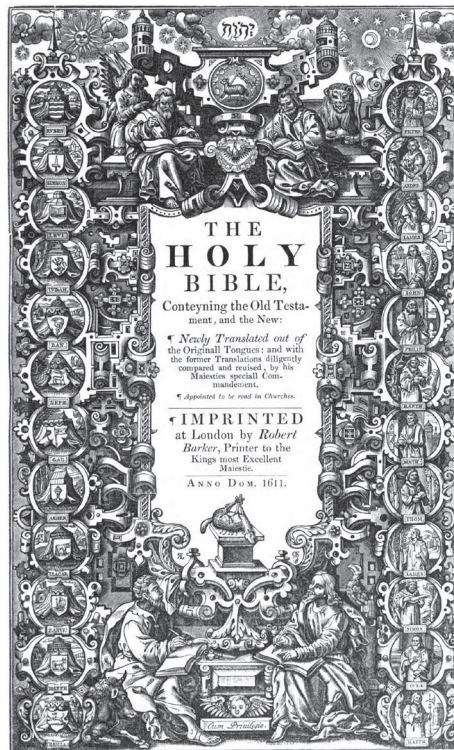
Cluster 1. Translation, Judaism, and Textuality

Translating the Bible Again

Robert Alter

When Genesis, the first volume of my Bible translation, appeared in 1996, my nephew, a perfectly reasonable and intelligent man, asked his mother why on earth I would want to do still another translation of the Bible. The simple answer, which I offer as someone who has been devoted to reading the Bible in Hebrew since late adolescence, is that there is something wrong with all the English versions. We have, of course, a canonical English translation, the King James Version, which has many splendid passages and which has permanently changed literary English. There are, however, serious problems with the King James Version beyond the fact that much of its language is now archaic. It is marred by all sorts of misunderstandings of the Hebrew, some minor, some real howlers. In regard to style, for the most part it does better with the narrative prose than with the poetry. For the poetry, it produces lines that soar, and that are etched in our collective memory, but also lines that stumble, collapsing into arrhythmia by rendering the beautifully compact Hebrew in a welter of unnecessary syllables and words. I suspect that this deficiency may reflect the fact that for the King James translators Hebrew was a language to be deciphered on the page, not a language they heard.

The sundry translations done in the second half of the twentieth century by scholarly-ecclesiastical committees sought to strike out in an entirely new direction, but with lamentable results that made the King James Version still preferable to the new versions. For most Jews, the English Bible that unfortunately has become the default text is the New Jewish Publication Society version, begun in the early 1960s and completed in 1985. The scholarly credentials of the participating translators were impeccable, and I would assume that they had a love for the expressive power of the Hebrew similar to my own. The underlying problem for their enterprise was



Title page reprinted from *The Holy Bible, conteyning the Old Testament, and the New.* (London: Robert Barker, 1611). Courtesy of Cambridge University Press.

that, unlike the translators working in early seventeenth-century England, the members of the JPS team were cut off by their cultural location and their academic training from the literary language of the time. When you do a doctorate in Biblical Studies at Harvard or Yale or the University of Pennsylvania, you learn many useful things, from Ugaritic to archeological analysis, but issues of prose style and poetic form will scarcely be addressed in your classes, and you are not likely to be reading James Joyce or Wallace Stevens in your spare time. Thus, the JPS translators, like their Protestant and Catholic counterparts, embarked on a misguided project of repackaging biblical syntax to make it look as though it were composed in the

twentieth century, of ignoring the rhythms of both poetry and prose, and of repeatedly stripping away the purposeful ambiguity of Hebrew terms by translating them according to context, in explanatory fashion.

All this was combined with a promiscuous mingling of linguistic registers in English—Joseph distributes “rations” in Egypt, biblical husbands do not lie with their wives but “cohabit” with them. Again and again, the JPS translation exhibits a tin ear for English. Thus, in the first chapter of Genesis: “God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night.” The unfortunate choice of “to dominate” not only wrecks the Priestly writer’s evocative Hebrew cadence, *’et ha-ma’or ha-gadol le-memshelet ha-yom*, but it is also a verb that belongs in the realm of international politics or of sexual perversion, not to the representation of celestial luminaries.

What I think a translator of the Bible should aspire to convey in English is not merely a set of lexical values but the fine articulations of the literary vehicle, for these are inseparable from the vision of God and humanity and history and morality that the biblical writers intended to express. The shaping force of the Hebrew syntax needs to be respected wherever possible—the cadenced sequence of parallel clauses in the narrative prose, the strategic deployment of syntactical inversions used to underscore a thematic point or to highlight an aspect of character. A translator should seek to replicate the subtle, precise, and sometimes daring word choices of the Hebrew and not “regularize” them to look like the choices of an altogether conventional modern English writer. Biblical Hebrew exhibits three general levels of diction: a relatively simple middle diction for the narratives, deliberately limited in vocabulary; a specialized poetic diction for the poetry, reflecting a somewhat archaic language and even distinctive grammatical features; and a diction in the

Christ about To the Hebrewes. the Angels.

me, even thine owne selfe besides:
 20 Hea, brother, let mee haue toy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowles in the Lord.
 21 Having confidence in thy obedience, I wrote vnto thee, knowing that thou wilt also doe more then I say.
 22 But wilt thou prepare mee also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be giuen vnto you.

23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Iesus:
 24 Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow labourers.
 25 The grace of our Lord Iesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Written from Rome to Philemon, by Onesimus a servant.



THE EPISTLE OF PAUL the Apostle to the Hebrewes.

CHAP. I.

1 Christ in these last times coming to vs from the Father, 4 is preferred about the Angels, both in Person and Office.



Who at sundry times, and in diuers manners, spake in time past vnto the Fathers by the Prophets, 2 hath in these last dayes spoken vnto vs by his Sonne, whom he hath appointed heire of all things, by whom also he made the worldes.

3 Who being the brightnesse of his glory, and the expresse image of his person, and vpholding all things by the word of his power, when hee had by himselfe purged our finnes, fate down on y^e right hand of the Maiestie on high,

4 Being made so much better then the Angels, as hee hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent Name then they.
 5 For vnto which of the Angels said hee at any time, Thou art my sonne, this day haue I begotten thee: And againe, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Sonne.
 6 And againe, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, hee saith, And let all the Angels of God worship him.
 7 And of the Angels he saith: who

maketh his Angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

8 But vnto the Sonne, he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for euer and euer: a scepter of righteousnesse is the scepter of thy kingdom.

9 Thou hast loued righteousnesse, and hated iniquitie, therefore God, euen thy God hath anointed thee with the oyle of gladnesse above thy fellows.

10 And, thou Lord in the beginning hast layed the foundation of the earth: and the heauens are the works of thine hands.

11 They shall perish, but thou remainest: and they all that waie old as doth a garment.

12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them by, and they shall be changed, but thou art the same, and thy yeres shall not faile:

13 But to which of the Angels said hee at any time, Sit on my right hand, vntill I make thine enemies thy footstool:

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heires of saluation?

CHAP. II.

1 Wee ought to bee obedient to Christ Iesus, 5 and that because he vouchsafed to take our nature vpon him, 14 as it was necessarie.

Therefore we ought to giue the more earnest heede to the things which we haue heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

For righte-
ness, or
straightnes.

Phil. 1. 02. 1.
1. 14. 4.

Phil. 1. 10.
2. 1. 22.
4.

For, vnto
as looking
vnto.

Reprinted from *The Holy Bible, conteyning the Old Testament, and the New.* (London: Robert Barker, 1611). Courtesy of Cambridge University Press.

lively dialogues that often gestures toward the colloquial. A translator should at least attempt to show these differences. There is also the vigorous presence of soundplay and wordplay in the Hebrew. Perhaps one should call this the translator's despair because a reasonable English equivalent is often hard to imagine; but, given the expressive importance of such linguistic play in the Hebrew, it is worth trying to devise viable English equivalents. These will often not be attainable, but I can attest that sometimes you get lucky and succeed in conveying something akin to the effect of the Hebrew.

Translating any great work, and perhaps above all the Bible, requires a quality of intellectual humility. All translations are imperfect things, or, from a different point of view, mere works in progress. The

imperfections are bound to be especially salient in the case of the Bible because the structure of Biblical Hebrew and the semantic range of many of its terms are so different from those of modern English. I have produced my own versions of biblical texts in the awareness that they are necessarily approximations, sometimes good approximations and sometimes inevitably unsatisfactory ones.

Is this a Jewish enterprise? I would have to say that I am an inveterate literary person and that as such I respond with excitement and wonder to the literary vehicle of the Bible, which I have tried to emulate in English. But that vehicle is for me always indelibly Hebrew, and in this I feel a certain identification, even though I am a translator, with Rashi and Ibn Ezra and all the Jews through the ages who would not have thought of reading the

Bible except in Hebrew. My dream, which can be only distantly realized, is to fashion an English Bible that feels like the Hebrew, recovering the earthiness and the precious concreteness of the biblical language, clearing the text of the lingering residue of Protestant theology (the "souls" and the "salvations"), and suggesting to readers what anyone who knows the Hebrew will palpably sense, that this is a kind of writing which indissolubly weds beautiful language with a probing complexity and subtlety of vision.

Robert Alter is professor emeritus of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at the University of California–Berkeley. He has written widely on the European and American novel, on modern Hebrew literature, and on literary aspects of the Bible and has translated a large portion of the Bible.

The Translation as a Bilingual Text: The Curious Case of the Targum

Willem F. Smelik

A targum (an Aramaic translation of Scripture) is a translation that does not come alone: hardly ever is it left unattended by its parent text, the Hebrew Bible. While it may play, it is always supervised, its game subject to specific rules. A targum is not supposed to ever leave home and strike out on its own. The reasons for this peculiar and probably unique conception of translation as one part of a bilingual text are to be sought in contemporary rabbinic views on how to read and translate the Hebrew Bible.

To translate or not to translate a holy text is not an easy question. The answer depends on the view of how, if at all, such a text may be translated, whether indeed it is possible to adequately translate it, all the while minding the danger that a successful translation tends to usurp the position of the original. To defend the first Greek translation of the Bible, known as the Septuagint, an apologetic myth explained its miraculous accuracy vis-à-vis the original, thereby stating the claim of the translation's divine inspiration. For the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, the truth of the translation meant that it stood on a par with the original. Those who master both Greek and Hebrew, he claimed, "would admire and reverence them both as sisters, or rather as one and the same both in their facts and in their language; considering these translators not mere interpreters but priests and prophets to whom it had been granted in their honest and guileless minds to go along with the most pure spirit of Moses." Sometime later, the Talmud described how the earth shook in astonishment when Yonatan ben 'Uzziel first dared to air his Aramaic translation of the Prophets, with the translation of the Writings forbidden to him by a softly spoken divine decree.

The defense of either Greek or Aramaic translation is the flip side of the view that any translation is impossible without the text suffering significant loss. It is true that a certain sensitivity to scriptural translation is indeed manifest in many statements that are scattered over early rabbinic literature. The skeptic's view of translations is aptly captured in the following famous statement ascribed to R. Yehudah b. 'Ila'i: "R. Yehudah said, 'Whoever

interprets a verse plainly is a liar, whoever adds something to it a blasphemer and a reviler'" (B. Megillah 32b). While R. Yehudah's remark raises the bar for translation, as he emphasizes interpretative fidelity between a plain translation that loses meaning and a rich one that adds some, his words still leave room to embark on a translation, albeit precious little. Unsurprisingly, some voices would advocate an ever-stronger position on the translatability of the Holy Writ. The Amoraic source Sefer Torah (1.6) espouses a downright negative view on translation when it compares the day the famous Septuagint was penned to the desert day on which the Israelites in the absence of Moses molded the golden calf, that symbol of idolatry par excellence.

But two factors mitigate the skeptic's view on scriptural translation, and both of these are born of multilingualism. By the early rabbinic period translations were a fact of life, both in the Diaspora and in Roman Palestine. Under Roman and Sassanid rule, the vast majority of Jews spoke Aramaic or Greek. As is clear from quotations and manuscript evidence, Greek translations had long gained a foothold in Jewish societies, including rabbinic circles, which is exemplified by Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel's permission to write the Holy Writ in Greek (M. Megillah 1:8). Even the myth of its inspired origins, which started with the *Letter of Aristeas*, had gained acceptance among the early rabbis. However the suspicion of scriptural translation, rabbinic opinion had to accommodate a tradition that had already been firmly embraced by the rabbinic predecessors.

Not only had multilingualism made translation inescapable, the early rabbis sometimes voiced the belief that things were not lost but rather *won in translation*, as they embraced multilingualism as the manifold expression of God's language. The notion of the Torah as a multilingual text occurs in several sources, perhaps most notoriously in the statement that every single word that God spoke "split into seventy languages" (B. Shabbat 88b). Another example relates to Moses's speech on what the Israelites should do upon entering the Promised Land, namely to erect stones on which to inscribe God's

teaching "most distinctly," which can also be read as "well explained" (Deut. 27:8). In Mishnah Sotah (7:5) this story is taken up as follows: "and they wrote on them all the words of the Torah in seventy languages, as it is written, 'well explained.'" The Torah found full expression in a multitude of translations.

As far as we know, Greek was the first target language of scriptural translation, but Aramaic followed relatively soon. Some Aramaic translations appear among the Dead Sea Scrolls, although what is today known as "targums" are products of the rabbinic period, beginning in the first centuries CE, when some anonymous but erudite Jews—later named as Onkelos and Jonathan—cultivated Aramaic scriptural translations of the Torah and the Prophets for oral dissemination. Under Christian rule in Palestine, these were soon followed by the Palestinian targums to the Torah and even later by Aramaic translations of the Writings. All of these translations are widely regarded as a translation *sui generis*, which earned them the moniker "targum," which simply means "translation" in Hebrew but as a technical term came to denote "Jewish Aramaic Bible translation" in modern scholarship. What made the targum different were the guidelines it came with, and these guidelines above all highlight the absolute necessity to distinguish between the Scriptures and their translation, with the latter always playing second fiddle. In the Talmud, "Ulla prohibited the recitation of a *written* translation, for "they should not say that the targum is written in the Torah" (B. Megillah 32b). The distinction between the written Torah and the oral translation is designed to safeguard the unassailable position of the original; it became the hallmark of all targums.

At this point we see how the rabbinic movement eventually reconciled the positive, cautious, and skeptical views on translation. The careful distinction between the written text and its oral interpretation is the ingenious resolution, perhaps at the risk of stifling interpretation, of the dangers inherent in the practice of translation. Crucial is not the distinction, but the decision to tie in translation with the preeminent

Hebrew text on which it would forever depend. Targum would forever be framed as a counterpoint to the Hebrew recitation. This central construction has apparently been carried over from contemporary Halakhah into liturgical practice, when the former stipulated that Torah and targum should be recited by two distinct persons, alternating verse by verse, with the Torah read from a scroll and the targum declaimed by heart. The interpreter should not be the senior of the Hebrew reader, neither in age nor in standing. And in the end, the Hebrew could be recited singly, not so the targum.

The evidence is there for all to see. The targums handed down to us were never meant to be an independent text, a translation in their own right; instead, they point to the Hebrew original, which the manuscripts almost always included in their text. Only a small minority of manuscripts have no Hebrew source text. The majority of textual

witnesses present a running text in which Hebrew and Aramaic text alternate verse by verse (sometimes with other translations added); others have Hebrew and Aramaic in parallel columns (often with a smaller script for Aramaic), or on facing pages, or with an abbreviated Hebrew text (a few lemmata) followed by the complete translation for that verse; all of these basic formats, on which variations occur, signal the priority of the Hebrew text *and* that the targum should be read against that text, whilst no one should arrogate biblical status to any targum.

Even the grammar of many targums reveals the presence of the Hebrew original underneath its text. As long ago as 1864, Abraham Geiger observed how Onkelos's anxiety brought about many Hebraisms, a view confirmed by many authors since. The literal aspects of the translation so closely emulate the Hebrew that the Aramaic has a distinctly translational feel about it, the direct

result of a strategy to carefully reproduce all the building blocks and boundaries of the biblical verse. The anonymous translators responsible for these targums—teachings often had name tags, but texts remained anonymous—mapped the Hebrew text to their Aramaic translation with utmost precision. The two translations that came to be seen as authoritative, Onkelos (to the Torah) and Jonathan (to the Prophets), correlated virtually every single element in the original text with its new, translucent overlay, which by explicit design never quite obscures the original text. The targum translates and simultaneously *refers* to its source text. Grammar and translational structure betray the targum as a transparent overlay.

It goes without saying that this targumic foil frequently shows its own colors, not despite all the ostentatious fidelity to the Hebrew original, but *because* of it. Plain translation would not convey biblical

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meaning, as R. Yehudah bar 'Ila'i had spelled out so vividly. Often very subtle changes indicate an exegetical direction, for which the very first word of the Torah, *bereshit*, may serve as an example, since Onkelos translates this word with *be-kadmin* "in olden days," thereby studiously avoiding any statement on what came first. Targum Neofiti, our only complete Palestinian Aramaic translation of the Torah, agrees with Onkelos but adds a second translational equivalent, "in olden days, in wisdom . . ." This example illustrates two common characteristics of the targums: substitutions and pluses that steer the meaning of the original text in new directions. Sometimes the true significance of these subtle changes only emerges when we consider their parallels in ancient Jewish exegesis.

While all targums share certain characteristics, they can be quite dissimilar to one another. The so-called Palestinian Targum shares many translational aspects with Onkelos and Jonathan but weaves far more aggadic material into its text. Other targums, such as Targum Song of Songs and Esther II, almost transform the

meaning of translation, taking interpretation to new extremes and pushing the very boundaries of what a translation is; they may follow the original verse boundaries and order, but their relationship to the Hebrew becomes apparent only after careful exegetical study of their text.

Some of these latter targums, such as Targum Chronicles, may reflect the new realities of medieval Europe, where Aramaic no longer served as anyone's vernacular and the use of targum evolved accordingly. Its traditional role of a linguistic and, to a lesser extent, interpretative repository in the talmudic period received more and more emphasis. Medieval sources cite targum as a prep for Talmud study since its language was considered to be very similar to that of Onkelos. Although unmentioned, knowledge of Onkelos and Talmud would also have lent mystical creativity good services, since the Zoharic corpus was written in what may be termed "cod Aramaic." Gradually, targum occupied the position of an authoritative commentary to be perused by biblical scholars. By this time, the child had escaped its original confines: targumic manuscripts without

any Hebrew appear, and make sense now that they no longer function as translations, but as linguistic preparation for Talmud study and commentaries on the Scriptures, just as Rashi, with whose commentary they would soon be accompanied, and more often than not replaced altogether.

New pastures beckoned when the study of the targums took on a new impetus among Christian Hebraists, who appreciated the way the targums emulate the Hebrew "truth" and frequently elucidate obscure passages; moreover, a new christological use of the targums emerged, with polemical or missionary interests never far away. Our only complete manuscript of the Palestinian Targum to the Torah was thus preserved in a monastery for those who converted from the old faith to the new.

Willem F. Smelik is professor of Hebrew and Aramaic Literature in the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at University College London, UK. He is editor of the journal Aramaic Studies and the author of Rabbis, Language and Translation in Late Antiquity (Cambridge University Press, 2013).



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Tsene-rene: In the Language of Ashkenaz

Jeffrey Veidlinger

Among piles of decaying Talmud folios, prayer books, and rabbinical commentaries that had been stored in the great synagogue of Khust (Huszt), I stumbled upon an edition of the *Tsene-rene*, published in Piotrków in 1889. It was 2005 and the baroque synagogue in this Carpathian town was being refurbished. Workers were repairing leaks in the roof as we chatted with Shimen Repkin, who shared with us the history of the community. The synagogue was built, he told us, in the 1860s and was once the pride of Hungary. Following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it became the pride of Czechoslovakia. When the Germans occupied the town in 1944, they used the synagogue to store the property they confiscated from Jews all over the Carpathian region; they sent the property owners to Auschwitz. In later decades, the Soviet Communists tried to turn the synagogue into a social club for the adjacent shoe factory. Locals recall that a group of Jewish women protected the synagogue and the books it held, and prevented the Communists from expropriating it. Repkin invited us to sift through the books and take what we wanted; there were no locals left with any use for them. I stuck the *Tsene-rene* in my backpack together with a copy of *Shivhei ha-Besht* (In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov).

The *Tsene-rene* is often mischaracterized as a Yiddish translation of the Bible, a mistaken formulation that probably came from the text's original title, "The Pentateuch in the Language of Ashkenaz with the Five Scrolls and the Haftarahs." It is also known as the "*Taytsh-khumesh*," a term that means both the "Pentateuch in Yiddish (*taytsh*)" and "the translated Pentateuch." The common name of the text, *Tsene-rene*, comes from the Song of Songs verse *ze'eneh u-re'eneh benot Zion* ("Go forth and look, daughters of Zion"), with which the book was subtitled.

The original text was written sometime in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century by Yankev ben Yitskhok Ashkenazi of Janow, about whom we know very little. In fact, we don't even know which of the various Janows that appear on the map was his birthplace. One reasonable candidate is a town in Lublin district, which would put him near the cosmopolitan center of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, where



Khust Synagogue interior. Courtesy of the Archives of Historical and Ethnographic Yiddish Memories (AHEYM).

the famed Lublin Fair attracted visitors from near and far, and where the Council of Four Lands met as a governing council for Polish Jewry. The *Tsene-rene* was one of several attempts of the period to render the Pentateuch more accessible to Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazic Jews; it was part of a democratization of Jewish knowledge made possible by the advent of the printing press and the ethos of the era.

The text was ostensibly directed toward women, "daughters of Zion," and therefore is also sometimes called a women's Bible. In Yankev ben Yitskhok's words, he wrote the *Tsene-rene* so that:

all the people of the land, both small and great, might themselves know and understand how to read all of the twenty-four books. For the people hear sermons in the synagogues and do not understand what the sermon is. They speak too rapidly in the synagogue, but in the book one can read slowly, so that one can understand by oneself.

By the early twentieth century, the *Tsene-rene* had become one of the most popular texts among eastern European Jews. It was



Title page of the author's copy of the *Tsene-rene* from the Khust Synagogue. Courtesy of the author.

often bound together with other essential works of devotional literature, rendering the tome a complete Jewish library for the common reader. The copy I have was bound together with a prayer book, segments of the *Nakhalat Tsevi* (an eighteenth-century Yiddish adaptation of the Zohar by Tsevi Hirsh Hotsh), and *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers). It also included selections of several other texts that were printed on the bottom half of the page. If you only had one book, the Piotrków 1889 edition of the *Tsene-rene* would be a good candidate.

While women undoubtedly read the *Tsene-rene*, men did as well. The Russian and Hebrew writer and publicist Yehuda Leib-Binyamin Katzenelson (Buki Ben Yogli, 1846–1917) noted the role this book played in his enlightenment:

The *Tsene-rene* really opened my eyes. As I noted above, in the *kheyder* I studied only discontinuous sections of the Pentateuch, with no relation or connection between them. Through the *Tsene-rene*, a complete and elaborate picture from the lives of our ancestors was disclosed to me, a picture seasoned with fine and wonderful aggadot [fables], which captured my heart.

Indeed, most eastern European Jewish readers understood that a translation of the Pentateuch into “the language of Ashkenaz” did not denote merely a translation of the biblical text, but rather had to incorporate, at the very least, *khumesh mit Rashi* (the Pentateuch with Rashi), and additional midrashic commentaries. Without commentary there could be no translation. Indeed, early modern approbations commended Yankev ben Yitskhok for translating and interpreting Scripture in its context and with homiletics. But he selectively included translated midrashic material from a variety of sources rather than merely translate an existing compilation. The *Tsene-rene* is a translation without an Ur-text.

I had long been interested in translations of world literature into Yiddish. I had researched how Yiddish rendered Tolstoy, Dickens, Heine, and Dumas, but hadn't really considered what it did for the Tanakh. Spurred by the book I had salvaged from the Carpathians, I started a small *Tsene-rene* reading group with some graduate students. We would take turns reading and translating the singsong text into English. The vernacular Yiddish intended to ease access to the Torah



Seforim in Khust Synagogue. Courtesy of the Archives of Historical and Ethnographic Yiddish Memories (AHEYM).

for generations had now itself become a holy tongue, which we were rendering into our own vernacular, translating and interpreting what Yankev ben Yitskhok had himself translated and interpreted. It had truly become *der heyliker ivre-taytsh* (the sacred Hebrew-Yiddish translation).

We started in the beginning. The text of the *Tsene-rene* does not begin with the familiar passage “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” as one would expect of a Bible translation. Rather it begins with the prefatory sentence, in Yiddish, “here it will be explained why the Torah begins with the letter ב and with the word בראשית (*breyshis*).” From its first words, the text asserts its interpretive function. Only after raising this issue does the *Tsene-rene* launch into the familiar phrase, now in *loshn koydesh* (the holy tongue, Hebrew): “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The text then reverts to Yiddish, as though providing a translation, but instead offers commentary: “In the original creation of the heaven and the earth, the earth was wild and empty and the throne of glory floated in the air over the water.” This midrashic detail, borrowed from Rashi’s commentary on the word מרהפת (*merahēfet*) from Genesis 1:2, reinforces the image of an anthropomorphic God. The text consciously interprets as it translates, often politely declining to provide a literal translation and even denying that such a thing could exist.

The question of why the Torah begins with the letter ב is one that vexed the early sages, who assumed that the Torah should naturally begin with the first letter of the alphabet, א. Midrashic literature overflows with explanations for this occurrence, as though each sage was required to test his

chops by providing a novel rationalization for this invented incongruity. The *Tsene-rene* provides a sampling of interpretations, adapted from a variety of midrashic sources. First, the text proposes that the letter ב is closed on three sides and open on the fourth, just as God created the world to be closed on three sides, but open to the north. The *Tsene-rene* then provides the well-known alternative explanation from Midrash Tanhuma, that ב is the first letter of the word ברכה (*brokhe*; blessing), whereas א is the first letter of the word ארור (*arur*; cursed). The text seamlessly jumps from *loshn koydesh* to *taytsh*. How can such a discussion be adequately translated?

The text continues to explain how the Bible foretold the destruction of the temple. It interprets the phrase *tohu va-vohu* to refer to the future, when the earth will become wild and laid waste (a *khurbn*) and the presence of God will disappear. I could think of no better explanation for the likely fate of the erstwhile owner of my own copy of the *Tsene-rene*, who was murdered in the Nazi *khurbn*. But the *Tsene-rene*’s rendering of the next phrase, “let there be light,” is reassuring. It promises, the Yiddish text explains, that there will ultimately be redemption and that the temple will be rebuilt in the times of the Messiah. Again, I thought of Khust, where the leaky ceiling has since been replastered, and from where I had salvaged the book to read and translate, again, with a new generation.

Jeffrey Veidlinger is the Joseph Brodsky Collegiate Professor of History and Judaic Studies and director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan. He is the author, most recently, of In the Shadow of the Shtetl: Small-Town Jewish Life in Soviet Ukraine (Indiana University Press, 2013).

Genesis would have us believe that once upon a time there was one language and unified speech, and human society did not require translation. The story of the Tower of Babel teaches that translation was one of many labors imposed on humanity for our primordial sins—along with the sweat of our brow, pain in childbirth, the war between the sexes, wandering, and exile.

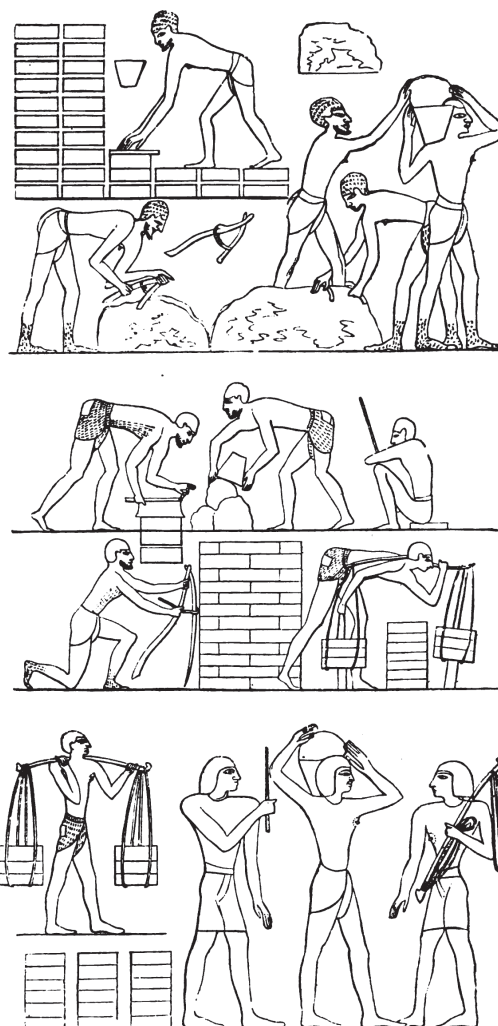
A midrash in the Tanḥuma offers an alternative primal scene: “When the Holy One came to give the Torah to Israel, God spoke to them in a language they knew and understood. ‘I [*’anokhi*] am the Lord your God.’ Rabbi Neḥemiah said: What kind of word is *’anokhi*? It is an Egyptian word. In Egypt, when a man wished to say to a friend ‘I [*’ani*],’ he said *’anokhi*.” Why did God translate the very first word of the Torah into Egyptian? The Israelites had forgotten Hebrew during their sojourn in Egypt. How would God speak with them? How would they understand the Torah? Translation became a precondition of revelation. Mutual understanding of the covenant was more important than a common language or holy tongue. And even in the language of the enemy, God’s word is still the word of God. Perhaps the impulse to translate the Torah is as old as revelation itself, and God was the first translator. Perhaps *’anokhi*, the first word of the Ten Commandments, is a secret *Fremdwort* within the Hebrew Bible—a trace of historical experiences that have made translation a necessary intermediary between the Jewish people and their Scripture. As is well known, the Jews not only produced translations, they became a “nation of translators,” the chosen people of a translating deity.

The insight has been expressed by Jewish thinkers throughout history. Deuteronomy begins with Moses setting out to “expound this teaching” to the people of Israel. Rashi interprets the Hebrew verb for expound, *be’er*, as “rendered in seventy languages,” and *be’er* is the same term that Moses Mendelssohn used for the explanatory notes of his 1780 German translation of the Pentateuch, the *Be’ur*. Rav Naḥman of Breslov also perceived the dynamic power of translation, specifically the Aramaic targum, to raise the Hebrew words of Torah to a still higher level. Franz Rosenzweig, who started out translating Judah

Halevi’s biblically infused Hebrew hymns into German, came to regard translation as a key to the transformative potential of Scripture, by which *he* meant, the Bible’s unique power to transform “our errors into its truth.” The Hebrew Bible never has been an antique volume for Jews. Throughout much of Jewish history, translating it was neither a scholarly, nor an assimilatory endeavor, but first and foremost a pedagogical one—a consequence of vernacularization.

Yet, from the very start, translating the Torah presented an unavoidable dilemma: it forced Jewish translators to choose between the words of Torah and the sense of Torah as traditionally understood. The dilemma is

noted in the Babylonian Talmud in Kiddushin 49a, where the rabbis attempt to understand what exactly is meant if someone refers to himself as a translator. “R. Yehudah said: If one translates a verse literally, he is a liar; if he adds thereto he is a blasphemer and a libeler. Then what is meant by translation? Our [authorized] translation.” This may be one of the first acknowledgments of the untranslatability of Torah, or the impossibility of doing justice to Torah through translation, of navigating a path between the Scylla of literality and the Charybdis of the accepted meaning. Only the Aramaic targum, the vernacular translation in use since the Second Temple period, was granted the status of a holy translation.



Die Israeliten, Ziegel bereitend, in Ägypten. Ein Grabgemälde bei Theben, nach Koffelini.
 © 182 323

Detail from Philippson, Ludwig. *Die Israelitische Bibel* (Leipzig: Baumgartner's Buchhandlung, 1839), 323.

nicht davon, und rühret nicht daran, daß ihr nicht sterbet. 4. Und die Schlange sprach zu dem Weibe: Ihr werdet nicht sterben. 5. Sondern Gott weiß, daß am Tage, wo ihr esset davon, werden eure Augen aufgethan, und ihr werdet wie Gott, erkennend Gutes und Böses. 6. Und das Weib sah, daß gut sei der Baum zum Essen, und daß er eine Lust für die Augen, und wünschenswerth der Baum verständig zu machen, und sie nahm von seiner Frucht und aß, und gab auch ihrem Manne, und er aß. 7. Und aufgethan wurden die Augen Weider, daß sie er-

תאכלו ממנו ולא תנעו בו פרהמתון: (ה) ויאמר הנחש אל האשה לא ימות המות: (ו) כי ידע אלהים כי ביום אכלכם ממנו וגסקו עיניכם והייתם כאלהים ידעו טוב ורע: (ז) ותרא האשה כי טוב העץ למאכל וכי תאוה הוא לעינים וגרמהו העץ להשגיל ותקח מפריו והאכל ותתן גם לאיש עמה ויאכל: (ח) ותפקתה עיני שניהם וגרעו

natürliche Folge. — 5. Daher Sinnigerklärung dieser als Grund des Verbots, und das Nachsehen eines andern, die Befürchtung des Verbotens verächtlichen Grundes als dem Namen des Baumes. Warum sterben nach dem Genuss einer Frucht und dem Baum der Erkenntnis des Guten und Bösen, da diese doch nur diese Erkenntnis, aber nicht den Tod als seine Natur bezeichnen? Zugleich Bedeutung des Ehrgeizes neben der Sinnlichkeit. — In dem ענינים ist der noch sinnliche Begriff von dieser Erkenntnis angedeutet, als ob diese nur in einer Verfeinerung des Leiblichen Sinnes bestesse. — 6. In der Stelle liegen demnach hier folgende Elemente der Sünde: Eüßerei; Sucht nach Freiheit oder Ungewissheit; Ehrgeiz; dadurch gereizte Begierde; freigeistliche Bewusstseins der Ueberehrung und Folge; Zucht. Die Steigerung ist hier trefflich bewahrt; zuerst „gut zum Essen“ wie jede andere Frucht, dann „eine Lust für die Augen“ endlich „verständig zu machen“. Die Volg. und meisten Reizen gehen hier dem Worte רעובות die Bedeutung von „beträuben“, und überseht, „sinnlich zu beträuben.“ Die Sept. und älteren jüd. Interpreten (Raschi, Ramban, Abarbanel) engl. und franz. Uebersetzung bleiben bei der gewöhnlichen Bedeutung, „verständig zu machen.“ Hierfür spricht denn auch, daß es ein sehr matter Zusatz wäre nach dem starken Ausdruck וראתה. Anders also die ersten beiden Ausdrücke die Erregung der sinnlichen Begierde bezeichnen, denkt nun in dem letzten das Weib auch an den eigentlichen Grund, Klug zu werden. — Weib und Mann werden hier noch in dem engen Verhältnis, und fast als identisch in ihrem Willen und Thun dargestellt, daher so kurz über die Theilnahme des Mannes an der Sünde. Das er gemerkt, was er verzehret, sieht man aus dem וראתה in der Stelle 12. und der Art der Entscheidung. — 7. Die erste Folge der Sünde, das Bewusstsein erwachte, sie erkannten ihren Zustand, die Scham ist gemeldet, aus der entspringt wieder das Bewusstsein des geschichtlichen Verhältnisses. — Die Feige (*Ficus carica* Linn.), einer der ältesten von den Menschen benutzten Baumarten mit Zapfen getheilten, aber sauren und dunkelgrünen, unten weißen, feinspaltigen Blättern, von beträchtlicher Breite. Man erinnert sich hier um die Hüften gestärkten Schürzen der Mütter, die erste Stufe der menschlichen Bekleidung. — 8. Nach der Scham und dem Bewusstsein der Sünde die Furcht. Was ist קול ר? und was רוח היום? Ueber das letztere sind die Erklärer einig: der Wind, der zur Abendzeit sich erhebet, und der sich namentlich in den südlichen Ländern nach der Hitze des Tages süßlich macht. Das aber bei קול ר? nicht an irgend Worte zu denken ist, sieht man daraus, daß das Uebersich erst weitest angefaßt wird, und Adam folglich antwortet. קול ר? heißt hier Donner, versg. Pf. 29. In den südlichen Ländern ist fast täglich gegen Abend ein Gemitter, darum ist קול ר? auch hier der Donner. Auch sprachlich steht dem nichts entgegen; קול ר? zu bezeichnen, wie die Reuten, auf ר? sondern auf קול. Das ור? mit קול verbunden wird, namentlich um lang geöhnt, anfschwelende und nachhallende Töne zu bezeichnen, sieht man aus 2 W. 19, 19; Hithp. von ר? sieht aber oft für Kal. So wird Kal von Hithp. und von



Ficus carica.

Philipppson, Ludwig. *Die Israelitische Bibel* (Leipzig: Baumgartner's Buchhandlung, 1839), 16.

There is a logical logic behind another statement in the Talmud claiming that the day the Torah was translated into Greek was like the day the golden calf was built. It warns that translation's relationship to the original is potentially idolatrous, akin to a false image of the divine. A more nuanced view emerges from the prescription in B. Berakhot 8a: "Rav Huna bar Yehudah says in the name of Rabbi Ami: 'one should always complete the reading of one's weekly Torah portion with the congregation, twice from the *mikra* [Torah] and once from the *targum* [Aramaic translation].'" The practice of *shnayim mikra*, "twice from Torah," captures the ambivalence towards the use of translation by prohibiting the illusion of equivalence between, or equal time for, Scripture and translation. On a weekly basis, contact with Hebrew Torah must exceed contact with translation by two to one. The message is that while understanding the text is important, it is not as important as, is not a substitute for, the ritualized chanting and hearing of Torah. Knowing the contents or sense of the weekly Torah portion is not to be mistaken for an end in itself.

In her doctoral thesis on the medieval translation tradition in Ashkenaz, Nehama Leibowitz writes that Ashkenazic Jews took the rabbinic prohibitions against the use of an independent translation of the Torah very seriously. The custom of "twice from Torah" persisted, along with the sanctioning of oral translations, above all, for educating children and women. In old Yiddish, two medieval genres of translation were developed for educational purposes, both of which were designed to avoid even the impression of what we modern readers take for granted, namely, that the sense of Torah can be faithfully conveyed in a pure, continuous, stand-alone Bible. Printed guides to translation were permitted insofar as they would require a living, breathing teacher to make any sense of them. The midrash about the word *'anokhi* teaches that the translated Bible became a meeting place for God and the Jews in a time of radical transition. This was once again the case during the Haskalah. Richard Cohen likens the multifaceted return to the Bible to the construction of modern synagogues

des Erbbodens. 9. Aber die Taube fand keine Ruheflatt für ihren Fuß, und kehrte zu ihm zurück zu der Arche, denn Wasser war auf der Fläche der ganzen Erde, und er streckte seine Hand aus, und nahm sie, und brachte sie zu sich in die Arche. 10. Und er harrete noch sieben andere Tage, und entfandte abermals die Taube von der Arche. 11. Und die Taube kam zu ihm zur Zeit des Abends, und trug ein abgepflücktes Oelblatt in ihrem Munde; da erkannte Noach, daß gemindert seien die Wasser von der Erde. 12. Und er harrete noch sieben andere Tage, und entfandte die Taube, aber sie kehrte nicht wieder zu ihm zurück. 13. Da war es im sechshundert und et-

המים מעל פני האדמה: (ט) ולא מצאה היתה מנוחה לרגליה ותשב אליו אל-ההבה כי מים על-פני כל-הארץ וישלח ידו ויקחה ויבא אתה אליו אל-ההבה: (י) ויחל עוד שבעת ימים אחרים ויקח שלח ארדמונה מן-ההבה: (יא) והבא אליו הזנה לעת ערב והבה על-הידו מרף בפיה וידע נח כי-קלו המים מעל-הארץ: (יב) ויחל עוד שבעת ימים אחרים וישלח ארדמונה ולא יספו שוב-אליו עוד: (יג) ויהי באחד ו-שש-מאות ו-שנה

nach immer auf der Spitze erhalten sei. — 8. Die Taube mit ihrer Verleib zu dem Dache, unter dem sie nistet, und ihrer Scheu vor Feindschaft, blieb nur aus, als die Erde gänzlich trocken war, und brachte so bis dahin Sei-



Turtur risorius



Olea Europaea

den des Wasserhandes mit. Die Gattungen der Tauben sind sehr zahlreich, und über alle Klimate verbreitet. Die in Vorderasien gewöhnliche ist *Turtur risorius*, wovon die Rabbinen an passenden Stellen m. u. — *ידו* einige Reuten, „sinnlich“, „abgepflückt“ nicht notwendig zu bemerken sei, allein kann nicht auch nicht notwendig. Es war aber allerdings notwendig, da das Blatt auch hätte abgegriffen auf dem Wasser schwimmen können, und so die Brutmaßung, daß die Wäme frei von Wasser wären, nur davon abhing, ob die Taube es abgepflückt, oder schwimmend gefunken. Der Oelbaum, einer der geschätztesten Bäume des Alterthums, gern auf Bergen wachsend, hat einen frostigen Stamm, der von unten herauf Zweige treibt, die Blätter sind lanzettförmig, dick und fleis, fast ohne Stiel, 2 — 3 Zoll lang, und immer grün, besonders unter dem Wasser. Zwischen den Blättern kommen in kleinen Büscheln die Blüthen hervor, aus denen länglichrand die Oliven sich entwickeln. Oelbaumzweige und Blätter waren Symbol der Frucht und des Friedens (Gen. 8, 15. 2 Mof. 14, 4. — 13. bedeutet einen niederen Grad des Austrocknens, die Dampf- Schlämm- oder

Philipppson, Ludwig. *Die Israelitische Bibel* (Leipzig: Baumgartner's Buchhandlung, 1839), 27.

in the public sphere. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the translated Bible opened up the domains of language, grammar, poetry, philology, history, archeology, and all areas of knowledge for German Jews. Although determined to break from the Yiddish translation tradition, in fact, German Jewish translators inherited their forerunners' pedagogical mandate, as well as their notion of the Bible as an "open source." The *Tsene-rene* and other such books selected out verses from Scripture, then elaborated upon them with stories and homilies that related to them in an associative manner. In this way, "the door was open to many possibilities of choices of verses, to expand or contract the topic, to choose among the commentaries and draw whatever conclusions." Out of the Yiddish tradition, and also, by drawing from the Christian example, German Jewish translators updated and upgraded the image of the Jewish study Bible. An essential difference is that premodern Jewish translators boasted that they were repeating the vocabulary of their teachers, a fixed translation vocabulary referred to as

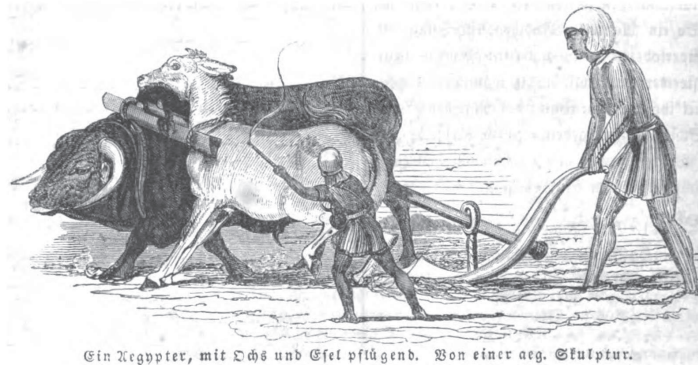
Mann nehmen, und ihn züchtigen, 19. und ihn strafen um hundert Scheffel Silber, und sie dem Vater der jungen Frau geben, weil er einen bösen Namen über eine Jungfrau Israel's gebracht, und ihm verbleibe sie zum Weibe, er kann sie nicht fortschicken sein Belang. 20. Wenn aber Wahrheit diese Sache war, es wurde die Jungfräulichkeit an der jungen Frau nicht gefunden: 21. so sollen sie die junge Frau an

אֶת-הָאִישׁ וְיָסְרוּ אֹתוֹ: (ט) וְעָנְשׁוּ אֹתוֹ
מֵאֵת כֶּסֶף וְנָתַנּוּ לְאָבִי הַנְּעוּרָה כִּי הוֹצִיֵא
שֵׁם רָע עַל בְּתוּלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא-תְהִיָּה
לְאִשָּׁה לְאִי-יִוָּבֵל לְשִׁלְחָהּ כָּל-יָמֶיהָ: (כ)
וְאִם-אֵמֶת הָיְתָה הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה לֹא-
נִמְצְאוּ בְּתוּלִים לְנַעֲרָה: (כא) וְהוֹצִיֵאוּ אֹתָהּ

רה קרי 20.



Orientalisches Dach.



Ein Ägypter, mit Ochsen und Esel pflügend. Von einer aeg. Skulptur.

Philippson, Ludwig. *Die Israelitische Bibel* (Leipzig: Baumgartner's Buchhandlung, 1839), 933.

khumesh-taytsh. But the modern Jewish translator was an author; he had to announce that his translation was an improvement over past versions and unique in some important respect. Of course, the source text was the same in every respect, but a new translation into German was, nevertheless, an urgent historical necessity. The break with the past was usually justified as a corrective or remedy of some kind, in light of contemporary conditions. Martin Buber made the case that a new type of Bible was needed for *der Mensch von heute*, but in fact, each of the translators who preceded him expressed that same sentiment in one form or another. At the same time, the translators had to create the impression of continuity between what they were doing and the vibrant classical tradition

of translation going back to Moses, Ezra, the Greek Septuagint, the Aramaic targumim and Sa'adiah Gaon. This tradition was, they believed, continuous from ancient to modern times; they insisted that there was no fundamental break. To establish themselves as the next link in that chain was the litmus test of their authenticity. Put most simply, modern Jewish translators faced inordinate pressure to frame their contributions as both new and old.

Translating the Bible was no punishment; nor was it just a remedy for the shortcomings of Jewish society. It became a privilege: a means of enhancing Scripture and amplifying its message. Modern translators experienced themselves as participants in a kind of torch relay, whereby the Torah was passed into their

hands for them to safeguard and carry a short distance in their day and age. Still, they worried that the torch relay would be perceived as a children's game of telephone, wherein the message whispered into one's ear changes just a little bit with each new transmission.

Abigail Gillman, associate professor of Hebrew, German, and Comparative Literature at Boston University, is the author of Viennese Jewish Modernism: Freud, Hofmannsthal, Beer-Hofmann and Schnitzler (Penn State University Press, 2009) and "Seit ein Gespräch wir sind, und hören können von einander": Martin Buber's Message to Postwar Germany" (NEXUS, 2014). She is completing a cultural history of German Jewish Bible translation.

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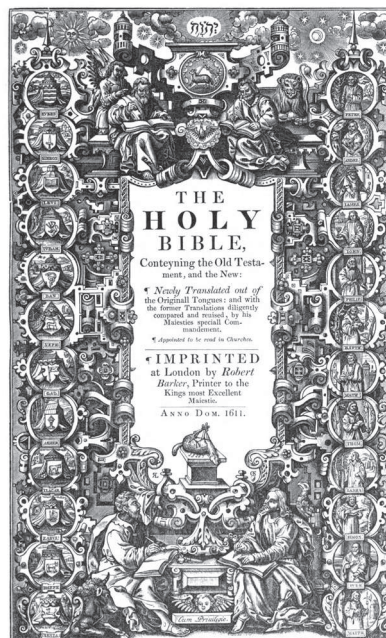
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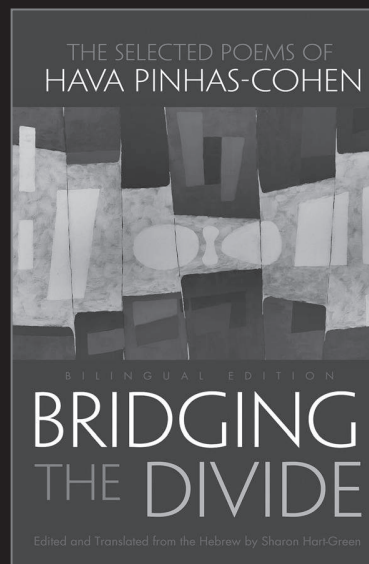
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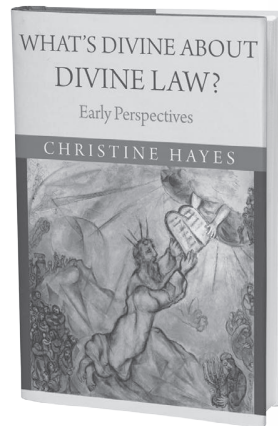
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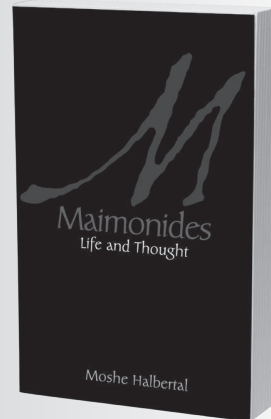
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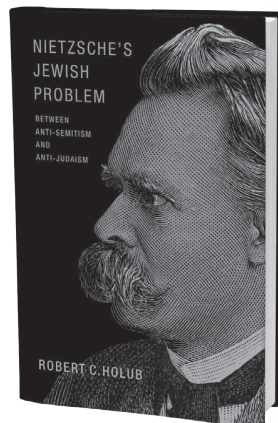
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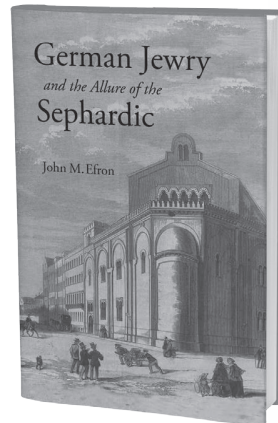
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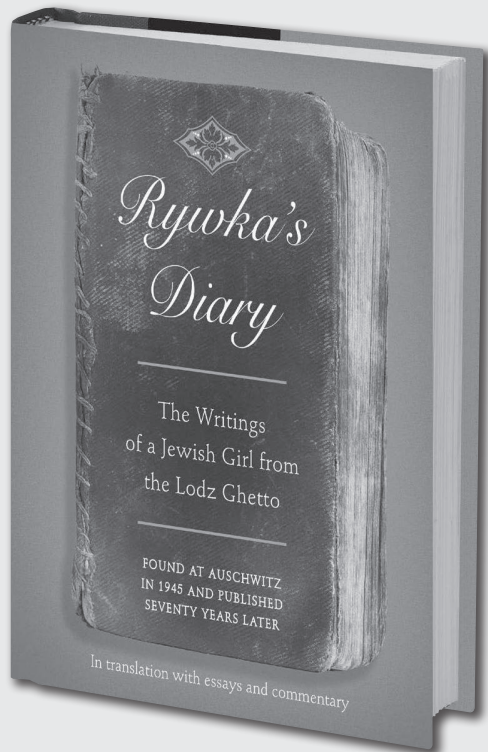
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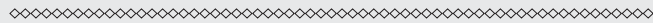
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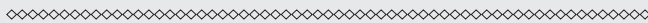
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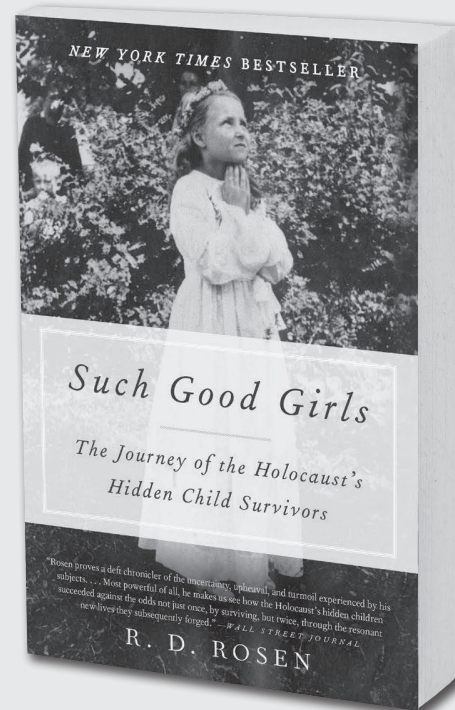
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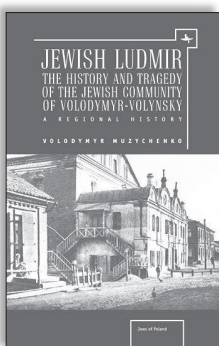


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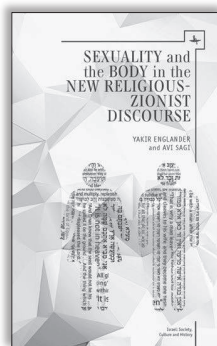


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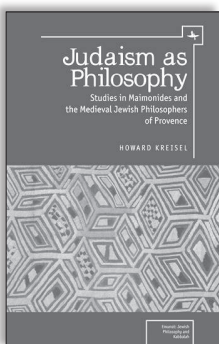


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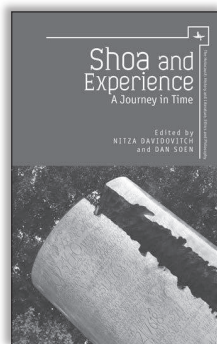


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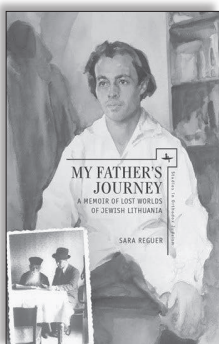
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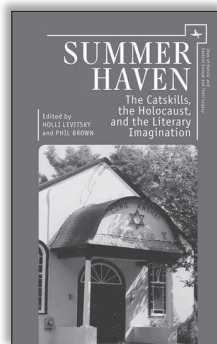


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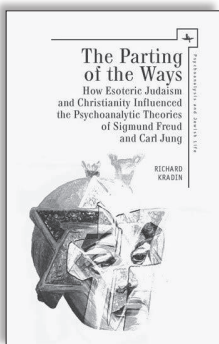
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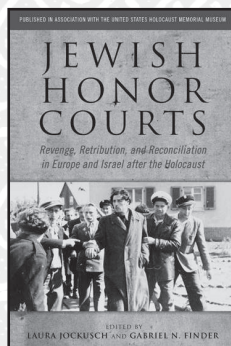
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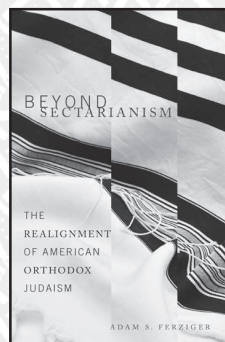
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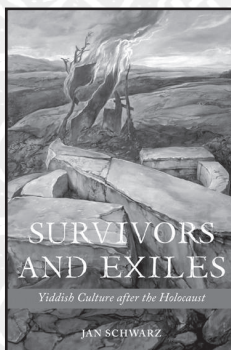
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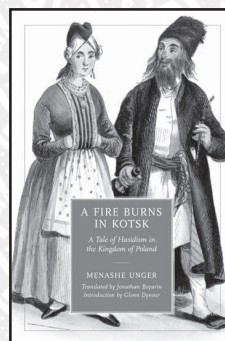
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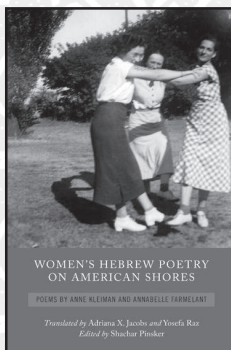
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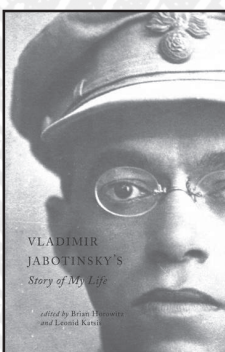
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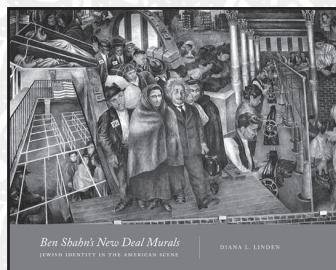
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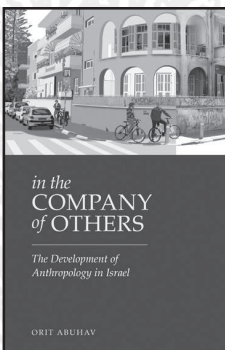
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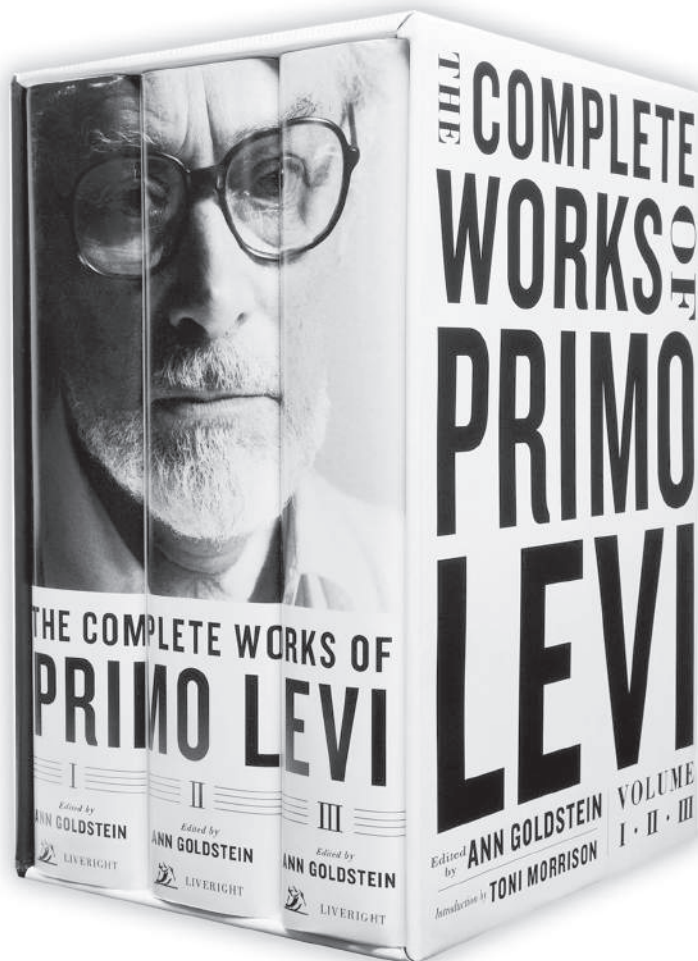
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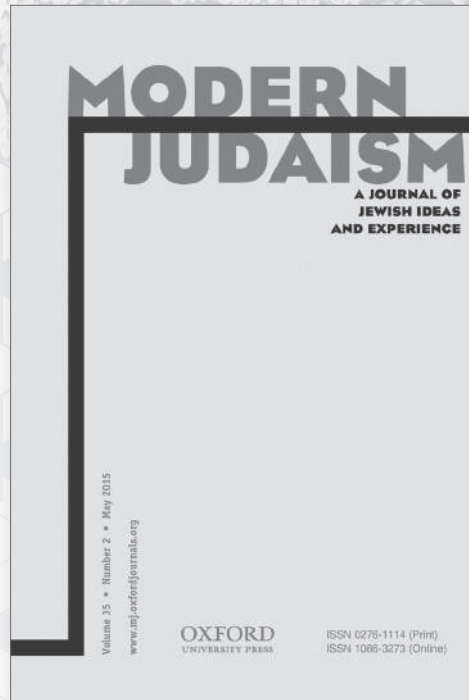
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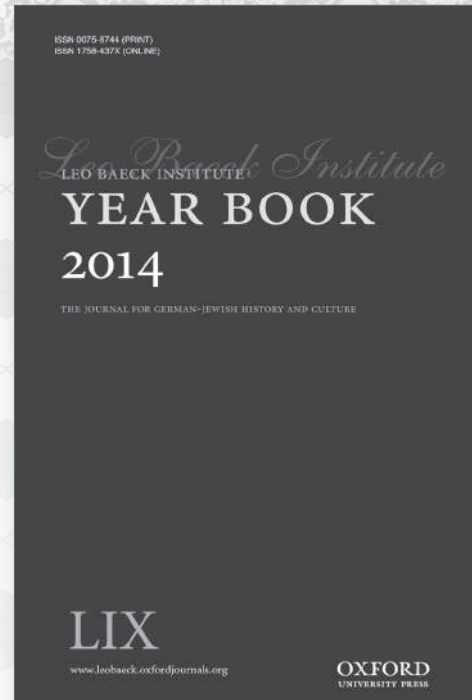
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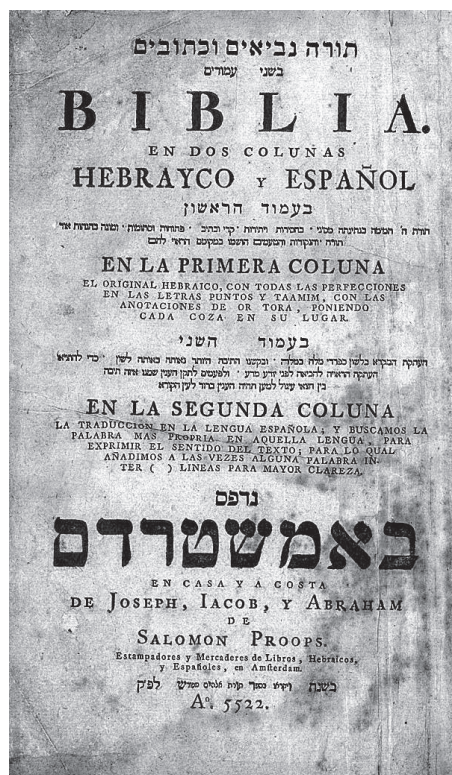
Translating Power, Translating Practice: Jews in the Early Americas

Hilit Surowitz-Israel

In 1760, in Curaçao, a small island a few dozen miles off the coast of Venezuela, a Jew named Abraham Mendes de Castro ordered a Bible from Joseph, Jacob, & Abraham de Salomon Proops, publishers in Amsterdam. Frustrated by the lack of Spanish and Hebrew Bibles for Jewish students in Curaçao, de Castro had the novel idea of printing a two-column Hebrew-Spanish Bible. Though Hebrew-Yiddish Bibles were relatively common in the sixteenth century, and Spanish-Ladino Bibles had been printed continuously since the Ferrera Bible of 1553, this was the first Hebrew-Spanish Bible. Not incidentally, it was also the first Hebrew book commissioned in the Americas. De Castro had the volume printed with the specific instruction that the proceeds of its sales be divided to aid the Jewish communities of Jerusalem and Hebron. The beautiful volume, bound in expensive calfskin, took two years to complete; de Castro did not live to see it in print.

The Bible's introduction contains an acrostic poem that pays homage to the Jewish leadership in Amsterdam, then the center of European Sephardic life, and so, on the surface, affirms the religious primacy of the Old World over the New. Nonetheless, the production of this volume signals a significant shift in the power dynamic between these centers, a shift largely determined by the history of the Caribbean community. Curaçao was established as a Dutch colony in the seventeenth century and became a major trade hub in the Americas. As part of their policy to encourage colonial settlement, the Dutch authorities afforded the Jews of Curaçao great economic opportunities and extensive religious liberties. Over time, the island community had become wealthy enough that it did not need to petition Amsterdam, its mother community, for aid and, as in the case of de Castro, some of its members could commission expensive volumes that required innovative typesetting and great attention to aesthetic detail.

To a certain extent the translation of power from Europe, and Amsterdam in particular, to Curaçao was driven by economic



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realities, as the island became, in effect, a mother congregation to other New World communities. At first its influence was felt among its Caribbean neighbors, as we find repeated campaigns undertaken by Curaçao's wealthy for the benefit of the Sephardic communities of St. Eustatius, Barbados, and St. Croix, among others. But Curaçao also played an integral role in establishing the earliest communities in North America, with substantial donations made to, among others: New York's Shearith Israel, including the funds for the construction of the Mill Street Synagogue; Philadelphia's Mikve Israel; Nephutsey Israel Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, which would eventually become the Touro Synagogue; and Charleston, South Carolina. These donations to Sephardic communities throughout the Americas continued through the nineteenth century (St. Thomas 1867, Venezuela 1875, New York 1898) and into the twentieth (Panama 1913,

Suriname 1928). And as is so often the case, the funds came with strings attached—ritual strings, in this case. Thus, Curaçao's Mikvé Israel's 1729 gift to New York's Shearith Israel was made on the condition that the “ritual and *minhag* [custom] of the synagogue should [always] remain Sephardic.” Letters documenting the subsequent transfer of Torah scrolls and ritual objects to Newport indicate that Curaçao's 1768 donation to Nephutsey Israel was made on the condition that “the Sephardic rite had to be preserved in the synagogue and that [Curaçao's] congregation Mikvé Israel be blessed on Yom Kippur.”

The religious conditions imposed by the Jews of Curaçao indicate that the shift was not merely economic, and in this regard too, the Spanish-Hebrew Bible represented a milestone. As a project initiated by a member of Curaçao's Mikvé Israel congregation for the specific religious needs of its members, it signaled that Curaçao was no longer dependent upon Amsterdam for religious direction in such matters. The specific needs in question involved the emergence of Curaçao as a center for *Conversos*, many of them coming from Spain, seeking to rejudaize. These Hispanophone *Conversos* made up the readership for de Castro's Hebrew-Spanish Bible, and so marked one of the first indications of the New World's religious autonomy.

Indeed, the de Castro Bible reveals the complex translation dynamics that emerged in the transition from the Old World to the Americas. Consider the halakic ramifications of the bald geographic fact that many of the Jewish communities in the Americas were located in the southern hemisphere. Specifically, when should prayers for rain be recited, given the climate of their new environment? The ninth blessing of the Amidah is *birkat ha-shanim*, a petition for a bountiful harvest. During certain times of the year, a brief statement is appended to this blessing: *ve-ten tal u-matar li-verakhah* (“and grant dew and rain for a blessing”). Though there are some differences in custom regarding the precise time and duration of the request (e.g., depending on whether the

petitioner is in Israel or outside it), it had always corresponded to the seasons of the northern hemisphere and was recited between the Hebrew months of Tishrei (September) and Nisan (April). This arrangement was, of course, altogether inappropriate for Jews in the southern hemisphere, a point addressed in *Sefer Torat Hayim*, a compendium of responsa by Ḥaḥam Ḥayim Shabti, a great rabbinic scholar from Salonica:

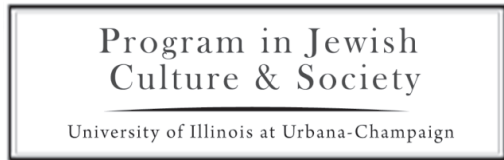
A question was sent from a distant land, from the Kingdom of Brazil, which lies at a great distance south of the equator . . . and the days of the year and the order of the year is reversed there with regard to winter and summer, as the sunny season is from Tishrei to Nisan while the rainy season is from Nisan to Tishrei. Rains are needed from Nisan to Tishrei, but not

from Tishrei to Nisan . . . Moreover, if rains fall from Tishrei to Nisan, it is very harmful, since the air of that locale is not as fine as our air, we who inhabit the north, and if rains fall from Tishrei to Nisan the air grows moist . . . On account of these reasons they want to alter the order of the blessings with regard to the mention of rain and the petition for rains from Nisan to Tishrei, and not petition from Tishrei to Nisan . . .

After a long discussion of the Talmud, Maimonides, and other (mostly Sephardic) authorities, Ḥaḥam Shabti concludes that “the aforementioned locale should not mention and petition the rains in *birkat ha-shanim*, except in the case that they need rains during the sunny season from Passover on.”

Religious authority tends toward conservatism, and this is certainly the case with the self-understanding of the earliest Jewish communities in the New World. Their leaders sought advice from European centers of learning, hired religious leaders trained in the old yeshivot, and constantly reaffirmed their fidelity to established authorities. But no translation is absolutely faithful to the original: the encounter with a new geographic, economic, and political reality could not but have ramifications for the religious ideals and practices of the Jews of the Americas.

Hilit Surowitz-Israel is instructor of Religion and Jewish Studies at Rutgers University. Her current research focuses on the religious and racial identities of the colonial Jews of the Caribbean.



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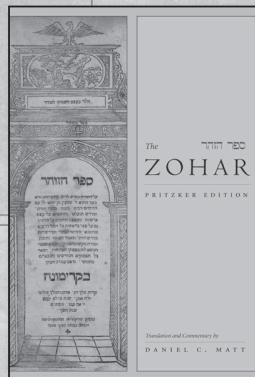
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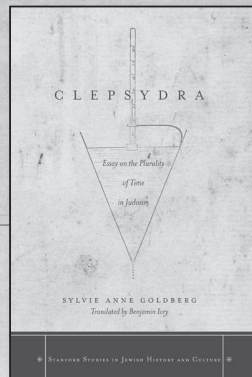
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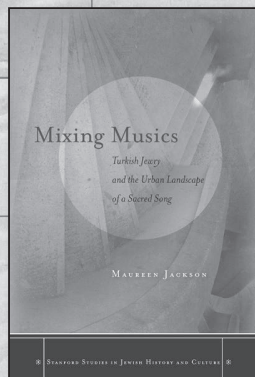
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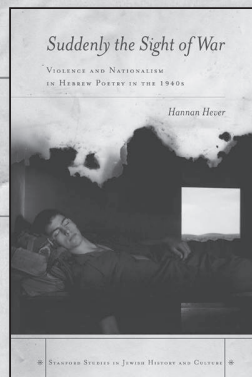
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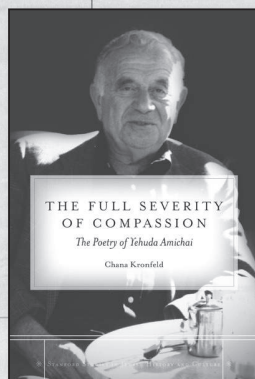
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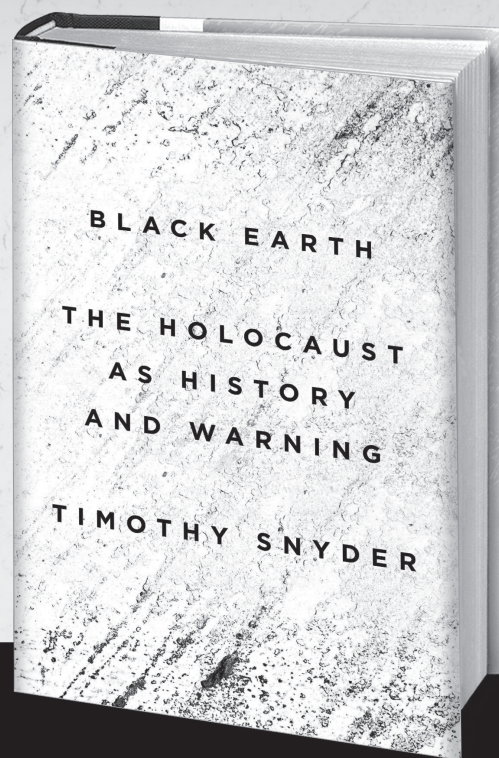


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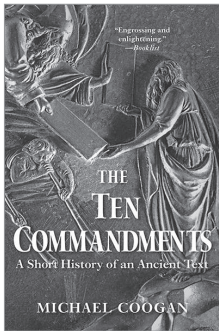
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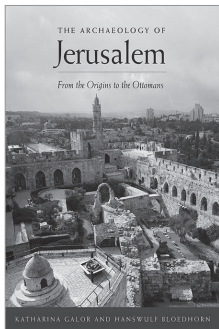


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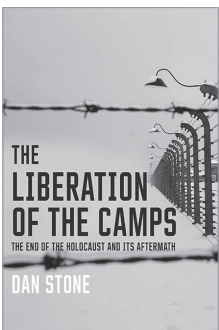


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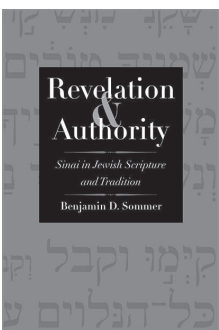
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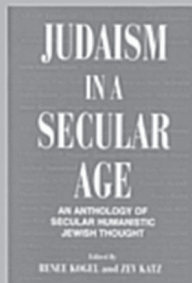
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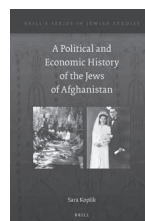
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Applications should include a detailed description of the project, as well as a budget, a letter from the head of the relevant department, program, or center indicating approval of the project, and the name of one reference.

Funding is intended only for faculty and graduate students at North American universities.

Please submit applications on-line via email to Cheri Thompson, administrator of the American Academy for Jewish Research, at cherithompson@gmail.com.

The deadline for applications is February 4, 2016. Recipients of grants will be notified by May 2016.

For questions or further information regarding this program, please contact Professor David Stern: dstern@sas.upenn.edu.



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2. A letter of recommendation from the dissertation advisor. The advisor must affirm the need for travel and the letter must state that the institution does not provide summer or travel funds.

All materials should be submitted online to Cheri Thompson at cherithompson@gmail.com by February 1, 2016. For questions and further information, please contact Professor Marsha Rozenblit, Chair of the committee at mrozenbl@umd.edu. Awards will be announced in mid-April 2016.

The Elie Wiesel Center for Jewish Studies at Boston University in conjunction with the Leo Baeck Institute in New York is pleased to welcome submissions for the **Leo Baeck Institute-NY Essay Prize in German-Jewish History and Culture.**

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Bible Translation and the Ideological Fragmentation of German Judaism

Michah Gottlieb

In the century and a half between the first German Jewish Bible translation published by Moses Mendelssohn in 1783 and the final one that Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig published under the shadow of the Nazis, German Jews translated the Bible obsessively, producing more translations than did German Protestants in this period, despite the fact that by 1900 Jews constituted a mere one percent of the German population.

That the number of German Jewish Bible translations dwarfed the number of Protestant and Catholic translations in this period is especially surprising given that Luther and the Protestant Reformation inaugurated the modern turn to Bible translation. Luther produced his translation in the early sixteenth century, and the next century witnessed an explosion of Bible translations. Jonathan Sheehan explains the role of translation in this period as a means of “releasing the Bible from the grip of the Catholic Church and at the same time, allowing reformers and their universal priesthood of believers to take possession of the Bible.”

The first German Jewish Bible translation did not appear until two and half centuries after Luther’s. Why? The answer in large part has to do with changes in German Jewish communal authority. With the rise of Enlightened Absolutism at the end of the eighteenth century, the institutional Jewish community (the *kehillah*) lost its coercive power, and Jews increasingly interacted with German Christians while striving for emancipation. Hope for emancipation confronted the reality that German Jews faced continued and sometimes increasing anti-Jewish prejudice. Advances in Jewish civil rights alternated with rollbacks. At the same time, many rabbis worried that the drive for emancipation was loosening the bonds of religious commitment as Jews were discarding age-old beliefs and practices.

The traditional German Jewish curriculum for males had centered on the Talmud. In turning to Bible translation, German Jews refocused their educational agenda on the Bible, signaling both their commonalities with German Protestants but also their differences, as they sought

to present a distinctly *Jewish* Bible. Bible translation was a space where German met Hebrew and Jewish thinkers wrestled with aspirations, frustrations, and anxieties about emancipation by enacting different visions of the relationship between Jewish tradition and German modernity. The plethora of German Jewish Bible translations reflects the fragmentation of German Jewry as different thinkers sought to define German Judaism.

There were sixteen German Jewish Bible translations comprising at least the Pentateuch between Mendelssohn and Buber-Rosenzweig. Many were associated with important ideological formations: Mendelssohn’s with Haskalah; Gotthold Salomon’s, Leopold Zunz’s, and Ludwig Philippson’s with *Wissenschaft* and Reform; Jonah Kosmann’s, Samson Raphael Hirsch’s, and Seligmann Bamberger’s with Orthodoxy; Buber and Rosenzweig’s with the Return to Judaism movement.

Each translator was confronted with a myriad of choices. What to title the translation? Should the original Hebrew text be included? What about a commentary and if so, in what language? Should the names of biblical characters be translated into their German equivalent or transliterated from the Hebrew? How to translate the name of God? Should the biblical text be divided according to the weekly Torah portion? How to treat rabbinic interpretations and critical Bible scholarship?

Abigail Gillman has noted that Mendelssohn’s translation strongly resembles the traditional Jewish study Bible, the *Mikra’ot gedolot* (lit., “Great Scriptures”). Both include the original Hebrew text facing a translation in Hebrew characters, with commentary below. Like the *Mikra’ot gedolot*, Mendelssohn gives his work a Hebrew title, *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* (Pathways of Peace). But Mendelssohn’s Bible deviates from the *Mikra’ot gedolot* in crucial respects. While the *Mikra’ot gedolot* often includes several Aramaic translations and invariably privileges the “canonical” translation of Onkelos, Mendelssohn’s replaces all these translations with his own translation into High German, which he calls “Targum Ashkenaz.” Similarly, the *Mikra’ot*

gedolot incorporate several commentaries, including Rashi’s seminal work, which was included in nearly all rabbinic Bibles in Mendelssohn’s time. But Mendelssohn removes all commentaries, including Rashi’s, and replaces them with a new commentary called the *Be’ur*. Addressing Jews raised largely in traditional homes, Mendelssohn’s decision to replace traditional translations and commentaries with the *Be’ur* signals his desire to replace premodern conceptions of Judaism with a new maskilic (enlightened) one.

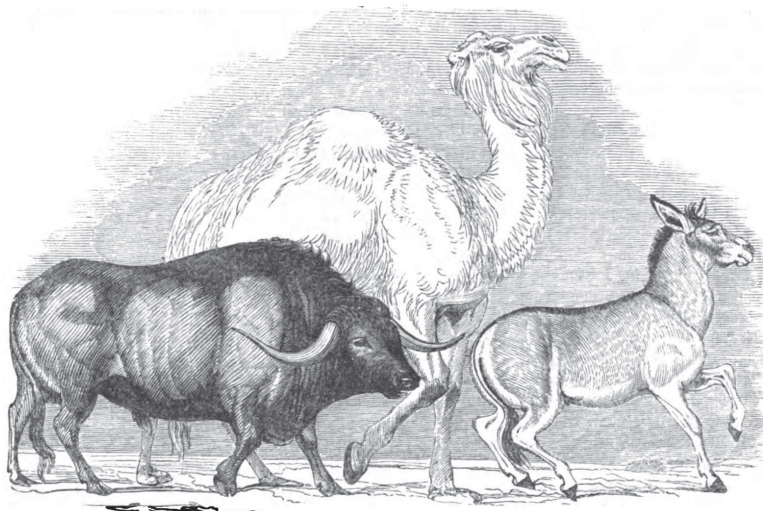
Leopold Zunz’s Bible is entirely different. Published by the founder of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in 1838, the work that Zunz edited (he himself only translated the book of Chronicles), was the first complete German Jewish translation of all twenty-four books of the Bible. Intended for Jews no longer familiar with Yiddish or Hebrew, Zunz eliminated the Hebrew original and gave his work a German title, *Die vierundzwanzig Bücher der heiligen Schrift* (The twenty-four books of the Bible). Zunz’s Bible was not a study Bible; it eliminated all commentary. It evinces a historical consciousness, as it includes a chronological table or *Zeittafel*, which mentions important events in Jewish history, giving their dates according to both the traditional rabbinic reckoning and the Gregorian calendar. When there is a conflict between the rabbinic reckoning and scholarly consensus (such as the date of the destruction of the First Temple), Zunz follows the scholarly consensus, thereby indicating his willingness to deviate from rabbinic tradition.

A historical sensibility is even more evident in Ludwig Philippson’s *Die Israelitische Bibel*, whose first edition Philippson published between 1844 and 1854. Philippson had planned to produce the first German Jewish translation and commentary on all twenty-four books of the Bible, though Salomon Herxheimer beat him to it in 1848. Philippson’s Bible includes the Hebrew original facing a translation in Gothic characters and a commentary in German sprinkled with words in Hebrew script. Philippson sought to create a Bible that would appeal to a broad spectrum of German Jews from Reform to Orthodox (hence the inclusive

netwillen. 14. Da geschah es, als Abram nach Mizrajim kam, und die Mizrim sahen das Weib, daß sie sehr schön, 15. und auch die Fürsten Pharaos sahen und lobten sie dem Pharao, da wurde das Weib genommen in das Haus Pharaos. 16. Und dem Abram that er Gutes um ihretwillen, und es wurden ihm Schafe und Rinder und Esel und Knechte und Mägde

וַחֲתָהּ נִפְשֵׁי בְגָלְלָהּ: [שני] [יד] וַיֵּרֶא
כְּכֹזָא אַבְרָם מִצְרַיִמָה וַיֵּרְאוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם
אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה כִּי־יֹפִיָּהּ הוּא מְאֹד: (טו)
וַיֵּרְאוּ אֹתָהּ שְׂרֵי פְרַעֲוֹה וַיְהַלְלוּ אֹתָהּ
אֶל־פְּרַעֲוֹה וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה בֵּית פְּרַעֲוֹה:
(טז) וּלְאַבְרָם הָיִימִיב בְּעִבְרָה וַיְהִי לֵו
צֹאן וּבָקָר וְחֲמֹרִים וְעֲבָדִים וְשִׁפְחֹת

Ägypter hatten in der alten Welt überhaupt den Ruf der Häßlichkeit, und eben so ihre Frauen; ihre Füße waren mißgestaltet, die Hautfarbe braun, die Stirn platt, die Backenknochen hoch, der Mund groß mit breiten Lippen. — 15. Pharao bezeichnet in der h. Schrift sichtlichweg den König von Ägypten. Erst in den späteren Büchern kommen Eigennamen dieser Könige vor, als Ph. Necho 2 Kön. 23, 29. Ph. Chophra, Jer. 44, 30. Der Pentateuch nennt die in ihm vorkommenden Pharaonen nicht, bei den Griechen hingegen kommt der Titel Pharaos selten vor. Pharaos heißt nichts anders als König; dies berichtet schon Josephus, und bestätigt das kopt. oaro, König, mit dem mant. Art. pouro, phouro. Spätere Schriftsteller gaben auch, aber mit geringer Glaubwürdigkeit, den Eigennamen des Pharaos an, den A. regierend traf, nämlich Josephus: Nechao; Malala: Naracho, Eusebius: Pharetones, Syncellus: Rameffemenus. — Bis zu dem heutigen Tage ist es das königliche Vorrecht in Persien und anderen morgenländischen Ländern, die unverheiratete Schwester oder Tochter eines Unterthanen, in das Gerail oder l. Harem zu bringen. Widerstand ist da Verbrechen, und Vater oder Bruder haben, wenn es ihnen widerspricht, es nur als Mißgeschick zu betrachten, daß die königl. Aufmerksamkeit auf ihre Verwandten gefallen. — 16. Daß hier „Knechte und Mägde“ zwischen Esel und Eselinnen ff. eingeschoben, will ein Erklärer als bezeichnend ansehen, daß die Geschenke Ph's schnell, ohne Maß und Ordnung dem A. zukommen. Wir geben hier eine Abbildung der Gattungen der hier genannten Thiere, welche in Syrien und Palästina



Der Dohs, das Kameel und der Esel in Syrien.

gewöhnlich sind. Das Kameel (*Camelus dromedarius*) ist besonders eine Wohlthat für die dortigen Gegenden. Das geringfügige Futter, mit welchem sie sich begnügen, die dicke Zunge, gegen die Dornen der Wüstenpflanzen geruffnet, die

Philippson, Ludwig. *Die Israelitische Bibel* (Leipzig: Baumgartner's Buchhandlung, 1839), 56.

name), and he was especially concerned with opposing Christian missionaries who were supplying Jews with cheap Bibles. To appeal to a broad swath of Jews, Philippson adopted a fairly conservative approach to source and text-critical questions; for example, he accepted Mosaic authorship of the Torah and polemicized against an array of Bible critics. But Philippson retained a historical sensibility and accepted elements of biblical criticism. He allowed that certain biblical passages may have been interpolated later, and would often

interpret the Bible in ways that contradicted accepted rabbinic law. In addition, he sought to set the Bible in its ancient Near Eastern context by including thousands of exquisite woodcuts that emphasized this imagery. In this way, Philippson used history to make the Bible vivid. Philippson's Bible was an enormous success. According to some reports, there were as many as 300,000 Philippson Bibles in circulation by 1866.

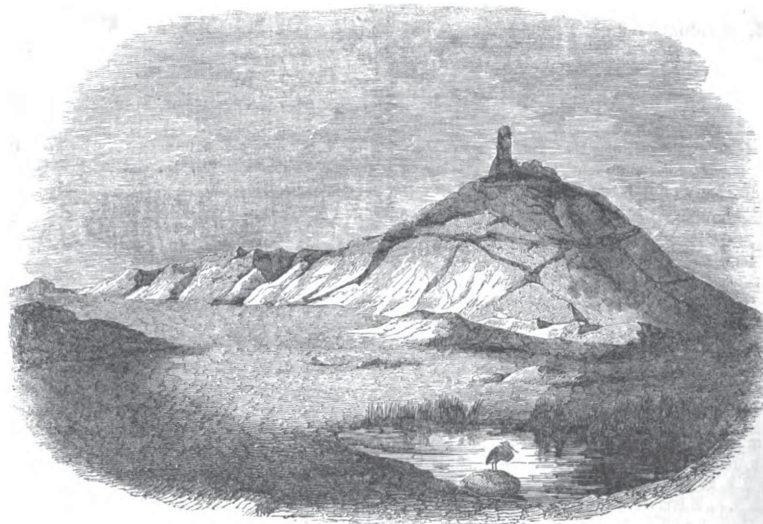
Samson Raphael Hirsch's Bible, published between 1867 and 1878, was in many ways

intended as an alternative to Philippson's. The format of Hirsch's Bible mirrored Philippson's almost exactly: Hebrew original, German translation in Gothic characters, and German commentary interspersed with Hebrew words. While Orthodox, Hirsch, unlike Mendelssohn, published his commentary in German and his translation in Gothic characters. This shows that by Hirsch's time, even Orthodox Jews were much more acculturated, and native knowledge of German was assumed. Opposing Philippson, Hirsch's aim was to present a Bible

sie nicht verstehen werden, Einer die Sprache des Andern. 8. Und der Ewige zerstreute sie von dort aus über die Fläche der ganzen Erde, so daß sie aufhörten die Stadt zu bauen. 9. Darum nannte man ihren Namen Babel, denn daselbst verwirrte der Ewige die Sprache der ganzen Erde, und von bannen zerstreute sie der Ewige über die Fläche der ganzen Erde. 10. Dies sind die Geschlechter

הָעוֹלָם: (ח) וַיִּפֹּץ יְהוָה אֶת־מִשְׁמַם עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ וַיַּחֲדָלוּ לְבַנֹּת הָעִיר: (ט) עַל־כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמָהּ בָּבֶל כִּי־שָׁם בָּלְלָה יְהוָה שָׁפַת כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וּמִשְׁמַם הִפְיָצָם יְהוָה עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ: פ
(י) אֵלֶּה הַזֹּלָרוֹת יֵשׁם בְּנֵי־מֵאֵת

זוהר נבנה zu B. 4. — 9. Babel, Babylon, wenn auch hier unvollendet gelassen, späterhin nach und nach erweitert, wobei Semiramis, Nebukadnegar, der die zweite Hälfte am andern Ufer des Euphrats erbaute, und Nabonidus genannt werden, war ins Viereck gebaut, und hatte 12 deutsche Meilen im Umfange, mit einer 200 Ellen hohen, 50 Ellen dicken Mauer und ehernen Thoren. In der Mitte der Stadt der Belustempel, in dessen Mitte sich wieder der Thurm erhob, der aus 8 Thürmen übereinander bestand, höher als eine ägyptische Pyramide und doch mit schmalere Grund. Babylon wurde von Cyrus und Darius erobert, später sank es immermehr in Trümmer. Unter diesen weit sich erstreckenden Trümmern sind es drei Punkte, welche als der hier in der Schrift erwähnte Thurm in Anspruch genommen wurden, ein f. g. Nimrodsthurm, der aber eine Ruine von Akad ist, Mujelibe und Hira Nimroud. Für den Letztern sprechen alle Gründe. Diese Ruine ist von länglicher Form, 762 engl. Yards im Um-



Birs Nimroud (Babel).

fang, auf dem westl. Ufer des Euphrats. Auf der Ostseite ist sie von einem tiefen Wassergraben eingeschlossen, und nur 50 — 60 F. hoch, auf der westlichen ist sie ein Würfel von 198 F., auf dem ein Stoß Ziegeln von 371 Höhe und 28 F. Breite. Sie ist durchbrochen von schmalen, viereckigen Oeffnungen. Die Backsteine sind mit Keilschrift versehen, ihr Cement ist so stark, daß man keinen ganz abbrehen kann. — Der Name בבל für בבל, wie Dnk. stellt, wie man im Syr. und Chalb. mehrere Beispiele von solchen Auslassungen des ל bei Reduplicationen hat. Die dagegen erhobenen Zweifel und die Ableitungen von בל בל verweist Fürst in der Concorbanz p. 138 und führt das Beispiel מללל für מללל, in

Ⓤ 1

Philippson, Ludwig. *Die Israelitische Bibel* (Leipzig: Baumgartner's Buchhandlung, 1839), 49.

outside of history, as a revelation in which the Oral Law (itself Sinaitic) constituted the Bible's definitive interpretation. Seeing the Torah, both oral and written, as timeless, Hirsch eschewed all comparative philology, instead originating a novel account of Hebrew etymology based on phonetic similarity and letter interchange that linked Hebrew roots conceptually. For example, in his commentary on Genesis 1:1, Hirsch noted that the word root א.ב.ר. (to create) is cognate with פ.ב.ר. (to flower), and ב.ב.ר. (to flee), all connoting

“striving to get out or getting out of a state of being constrained.” Thus, Hirsch interprets ברא in Genesis 1:1 as meaning that God brought “something into reality, which had hitherto existed only inwardly in the mind.”

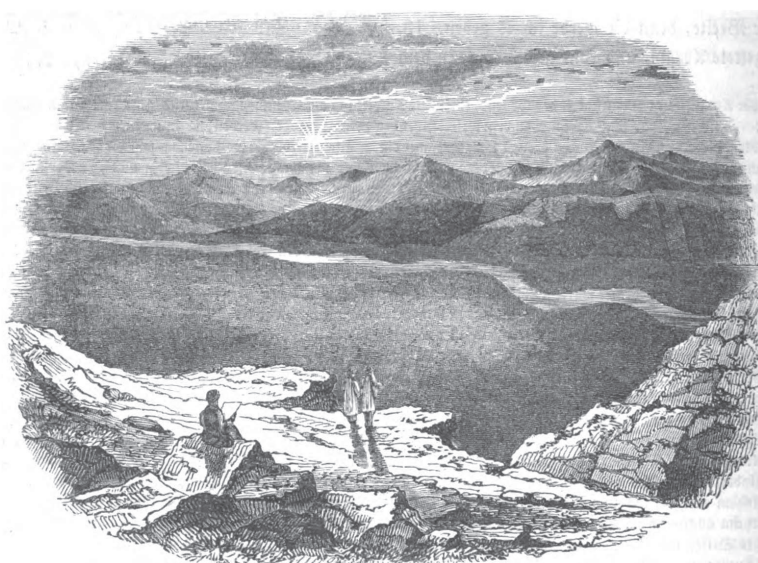
Finally, Buber and Rosenzweig's Bible sought to return an oral sensibility to the Bible. They noted that while the standard German term for the Bible, *Schrift*, means “writing,” the Hebrew word for the Bible is *mikrah*, from the root קרא, meaning “call.” Buber and Rosenzweig thus presented a Bible

that was supposed to be read by dividing it into breathing colons. Including only the biblical text in German on a clean white page, with verse numbers placed inconspicuously in the upper corner of the page, Buber and Rosenzweig sought to create a direct, immediate, revelatory encounter between the reader and the word of God. Writing for Jews who did not know Hebrew, they aimed to convey a sense of the Hebrew to the German reader by coining German neologisms that preserved roots in Hebrew, which Buber

ten des Ewigen, wie das Land Mizrajim, bis gen Zoar hin. 11. Und Lot wählte sich den ganzen Umkreis des Jordans, und Lot zog ab nach Morgen, und sie trennten sich Einer vom

יהוה את־סרם ואת־עמֹתָהּ כְּגַד־הַיְהוָה
כְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּאֶמְכָּה צֶעַר: (יא) וַיִּבְחַר־
לוֹ לֹט אֶת כָּל־כְּפַר הַיַּרְדֵּן וַיֵּסַע לֹט

geographische Lage, obgleich er der einzige Fluß des Landes ist, der im Sommer nicht austrocknet, ihm die hohe Wichtigkeit gegeben. Die Fußstapfen der heiligen Männer leiten noch immer an sein schmales Bett, der wunderbaren Geschehnisse Andenken führet den Wanderer noch immer an sein laues Gewässer, und von seinem kurzen Laufe ist jeder Fußbreit göttliche Geschichte: die Menschheit hat hier ihre höchsten Visionen gehabt, Israel seine glücklichsten und seine schwersten Stunden verlebt. Drei Quellflüsse, der Banias, Dan und Hasbany vereinigen bald ihre Wellen, um noch schneller in den 2½ Stunden langen, 1 St. breiten, schlammigen, aber fischreichen, schilfumwachsenen See Merom sich zu ergießen. Andere Flüßchen verstärken den See, aus dem nun breiter der Jordan — noch heute Orben von den Einwohnern genannt — hervortritt. Schon nach 2½ St. senkt sich der Fluß wieder in den See Kinnereth, und wird in ihm zwei Meilen weit geführt: die reizendste Gegend des heiligen Landes, mit Palmen, Feigen, Delbäumen und Weinstöcken besetzt. Rings um von Bergen umgeben, schlägt selten eine Welle des Sees höher auf. Von da ab hat der Jordan — nun Scheria von den Arabern geheissen — noch 13 Meilen zu fließen durch die Jordansau בְּכַר הַיַּרְדֵּן, el Ghor der Araber, um sich 200 bis 300 F. breit in das tobe Meer zu ergießen, von dem wir weiter unten sprechen. Die Jordansau ist eine zwischen zwei und 3 Stunden breite Ebene, die niedrigste von Syrien, und darum, da die Felsen die Westwinde abhalten, von drückender Temperatur. In der Mitte dieser Ebene ist wiederum ein 40 Fuß niedrigeres, eine Viertelstunde breites Thal eingeschnitten, in dessen Mitte der Jordan fließt, wie es diese Abbildung giebt. Im März und April trat in früherer Zeit der Jordan über,



Die Jordansau.

und besuchte seine Ufer. (Jos. 3, 15. 1 Chron. 12, 15. Sirach 24, 36.) An unserer Stelle müssen wir daran denken, daß das Thal, welches jetzt das tobe Meer bedeckt, noch zur Jordansau gehörte und als der fruchtbarste und bewässertste Theil derselben geschildert wird. Wo damals der Jordan mündete, ist nicht zu ermitteln. Dahin floss der Bach Elisä und Kidron, der Sabot, der Rimron, der Jaeser, der Maon, der Anon, der Zareb. Außerdem war durch Kanäle und Schleusen nachgeholfen. Deshalb und wegen der jährlichen Ueberschwemmung des Jordan lag auch die Vergleichung mit Aegypten nahe. Das כְּבַר leitete offenbar die Erwähnung von Sodom und Amora ein. ה' theils als höchste Bezeich-

ה 2

Philippson, Ludwig. *Die Israelitische Bibel* (Leipzig: Baumgartner's Buchhandlung, 1839), 59.

and Rosenzweig called *Leitwörter* or leading words. They likewise sought to reproduce the repetition between verb and noun that occurs in Hebrew. Thus they rendered Genesis 37:5, וַיַּחְלֹם יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם, as *Josef träumte einen Traum* ("Joseph dreamed a dream") rather than Mendelssohn's more colloquial *Einst hatte Josef einen Traum* ("Once Joseph had a dream"). They also translated in ways that emphasized the embodied expressions used in Hebrew as a way of highlighting that revelation was an encounter that embraced the entire self,

body and soul. It was not limited to the synagogue but encompassed one's entire life. For example, they indicated the embodied nature of revelation by translating רוח אלוהים as *Braus Gottes* ("breath of God") rather than the more typical *Geist Gottes* ("spirit of God").

Seeking to define their place in German society, Jews wrestled with the question of what they shared both with Protestants and other Jews and what differentiated them. Encountering an environment in which Jewish communal unity was fracturing and

adherence to Jewish tradition was becoming voluntary, Bible translation was a vehicle through which writers presented competing visions of what it meant to be a modern German Jew.

Michah Gottlieb is associate professor in the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University. His new book Jewish Protestantism: Translation and the Turn to the Bible in German Judaism is forthcoming with Oxford University Press.

The Politics of the Talmud in Iran Today

Jason Sion Mokhtarian

In the past decade, the study of the Babylonian Talmud has taken an intriguing new orientation that emphasizes the impact of the ancient Iranian world on Jewish culture. This promising course of research has garnered so much attention that panels on the topic at recent national conferences, such as at the AJS, have at times attracted standing-room-only audiences. Indeed, this type of attention to talmudic studies—typically a tedious and specialized field of study—is certainly a rare occurrence.

With so much going on in Jewish Studies, why has the subject of the Talmud in its Iranian context become such a hot topic of discussion in the academy today?

On the one hand, talmudists are taking advantage of the lack of interdisciplinary research that avails itself of the resources in Iranian Studies. The two fields have never been appropriately synthesized. And, given that few scholars in any field would dispute the value of understanding texts in context, the topic of the Iranian setting of the Talmud has become understood a pivotal, yet understudied, topic.

And yet, on the other hand, there appears to be another reason for the emergence of interest—namely, our present context, where the United States, Israel, and Iran are in daily headlines because of political disputes. This possibility has left me wondering: Is it impossible, taboo, or too self-absorbed to contemplate whether current academic research is influenced by modern politics?

Naturally, it is sometimes true that the interests of scholars in Jewish Studies—including in ancient studies such as the Talmud—are drawn toward lesser-studied questions that are on the minds of the public at large. This relationship between academic trends and public consciousness is illustrated by the surge in interest in Islam after the events of 9/11. In the case of the Talmud in Iran, it is thought provoking to note the ways in which scholarly arguments align and conflict with the ideologies of state governments. For example, one conclusion that talmudists have reached is that the rabbis were a marginal group that the Persian imperial government allowed to make legal decisions for Jews in their own local



Cover of Adin Steinsaltz. *Sayrī dar Talmūd* [*The Essential Talmud*], Persian translation by Bagher Talebi Darabi (Qom: Markaz-i Mütala'ât va Tahqīqât-i Adyân va Mazāhib, 2004).

courts of law. In a sense, the implications of this thesis promote a perspective that is probably appealing to at least some parties in the Iranian government—that is, the Jews were a legally empowered community in a vast Persian empire with ultimate political authority over much of the Middle East. If interpreted in a presentist context, the implicit message behind these types of academic arguments can be easily manipulated to demonstrate the validity of a particular worldview. For the Iranian government today, these connections between contextual studies on the Talmud and modern politics are why the Iranian Ministry of Culture gave the award of “Best Book of the Year on Ancient Iran” to Richard Kalmin’s *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine*, which the author discussed in a past *AJS Perspectives* essay. The use of the Talmud for political purposes by people with an anti-Jewish agenda is of course nothing new, dating back to the Middle Ages.

In June 2012, in Tehran, the Talmud was mentioned in an inflammatory speech made by Mohammad Reza Rahimi, vice president to former controversial president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. According to media

reports, at an event for the United Nations International Day against Drug Abuse and Drug Trafficking, Rahimi stirred up emotions by declaring that the Talmud was responsible for the proliferation of narcotics in the world, a business run by the Jews. Later in the speech, Rahimi clarified that there is a difference between Jews and Zionists, and that it was the Zionists who were responsible for the world drug trade. In his comments, which were subsequently denounced by United Nations and Jewish officials, Rahimi challenged the audience to prove him wrong, stating that “the Islamic Republic of Iran will pay for anybody who can research and find one single Zionist who is an addict. They do not exist. This is the proof of their involvement in drugs trade.” Rahimi blamed the Talmud for the Jewish-Zionist desire to destroy the world, saying that it teaches Jews to believe they are a superior race and to amass wealth illegally. Obviously, the ex-vice president of Iran—who is currently serving a five-year sentence for embezzlement—needs a few lessons in Talmud.

Fortunately, there are resources for Iranians interested in the subject, at least according to Iran’s online national library catalog. In research libraries in Iran today there are academic books about the Talmud in Persian and, more so, in English. Although as far as I know there are no translations of the Talmud into Persian, there are books on the Talmud by Neusner and Levinas, as well as the first volume of Shaked and Netzer’s *Irano-Judaica* series, Strack’s *Introduction to Talmud and Midrash*, and the *Cambridge Companion to Talmud*, among other works. Also available are English and French translations of the Talmud (e.g., Rodkinson, Neusner, and the Soncino edition). Not surprisingly, however, not everything in the library catalog is so enriching: it also lists anti-Semitic works about the Talmud, almost all of which are in Arabic, such as one entitled *Secrets of the Talmud*, with a subtitle on how Jews control the world. These works are accompanied by the recent translation of the Talmud into Arabic, completed by scholars in a think tank in Amman, which, according to reports by the Anti-Defamation League, accuses Jews of racism, and yet, paradoxically, also includes relatively

faithful translations of the original text.

One book that is widely available in libraries in Iran is the Persian translation of Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz's classic book *The Essential Talmud* by Bagher Talebi Darabi, a lecturer in Abrahamic religions at the University of Religions and Denominations located in Qom. The book is part of an attempt by this institution to translate English works into Persian, such as Arnold Toynbee's *Christianity among the Religions of the World* and *The Book of Mormon*. In general, Darabi's translation of Steinsaltz is essentially verbatim, at least based on the twenty-five or so pages that I examined. The translation includes an appendix of the talmudic tractates, with Persian translations. The book also contains the translator's original glossary of key words in Hebrew and Aramaic, some of which are specific halakhic terms (e.g., *teku*, "let it stand," and *ripui*, "medical expenses"), alongside Persian and English transcriptions, with Persian translations. Although there are some errors, the glossary is quite precise. In the book's acknowledgments, the translator thanks several esteemed friends from the Jewish Association of Tehran for helping with the Hebrew glossary.

In the introduction, Darabi correctly characterizes the two Talmuds as works composed in Hebrew and Aramaic from

Babylonia and Palestine. He compares the Talmud with *ijtihad*, *kalam*, and *hadith*. The translator declares that scholarship on other religions should not be narrow minded or result in negative viewpoints. The author explains that the study of Judaism can bring one closer to an understanding of Islam, writing: "It is hoped that understanding the past intellectual efforts on the part of the Jewish scholars in responding to the requirements of the observant and keeping alive the teachings of Judaism may also have a valuable contribution to the Islamic and Shia scholarship. The principal focus and topic of this book is one of the primary components of Jewish jurisprudence: a religion which, in this author's view, has more teachings in common with Islam than with any other religion." Darabi emphasizes that Judaism and Islam are comparable in their text-centeredness and oral transmission. In describing the Jews' attachment to Torah, Darabi describes how the Torah's meaning became unfamiliar over time, a fact that prompted the oral tradition: "For this reason, efforts have always been made to maintain, record, and preserve the definitions, description, or interpretation provided by the first readers of the holy texts." The notion of Talmud as a living document is important to Darabi, who also cites Deuteronomy 17:9 in support of the idea.

In stark contrast to these statements, the introduction has several problematic quotations, including from Joseph Barclay (who, in the introduction to a work on the Talmud says that "the rabbis teach hatred of Christians and Gentiles"), and Heinrich Heine, the German poet who converted to Christianity in the nineteenth century. The Barclay quote says that some of the Talmud is valuable and some of it is heretical, a duplicity that is common in the Arab and Persian world's engagement with the Talmud. There may be other manipulations in the book that I did not find, as well.

In the end, one hopes that scholars in Iranian universities, like Mr. Darabi, build upon their understanding of the Talmud, through Steinsaltz and the other resources available in English—including, now, the new subfield that is beginning to flourish in American and Israeli universities, which accentuates the significant influence of ancient Iranian civilization on the contents of one of Judaism's most sacred works.

Jason Sion Mokhtarian is assistant professor of Ancient Judaism at Indiana University–Bloomington, and author of *Rabbis, Sorcerers, Kings, and Priests: The Culture of the Talmud in Ancient Iran* (University of California Press, 2015).

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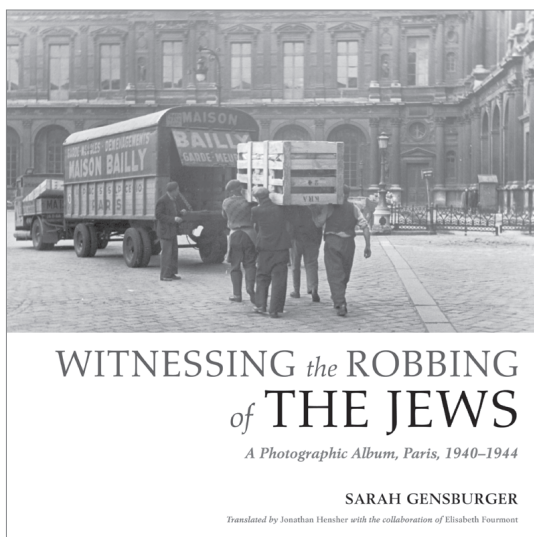
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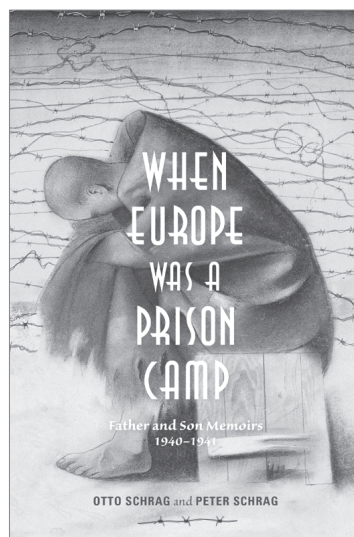
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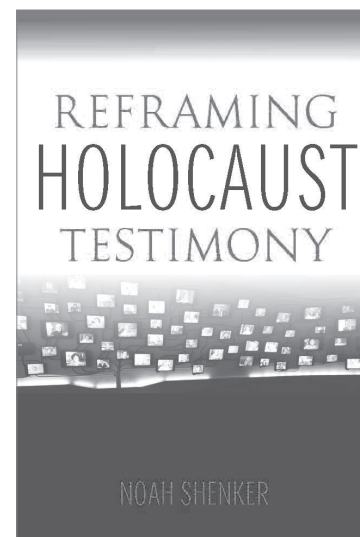
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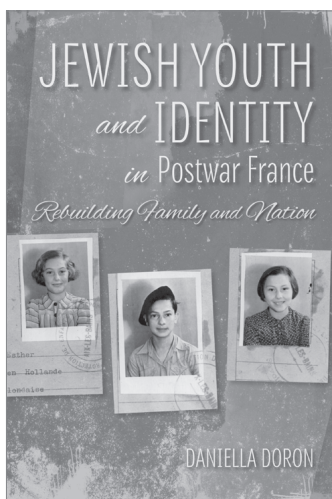
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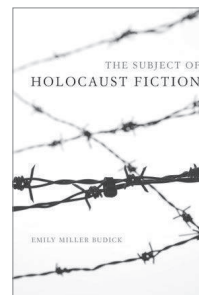
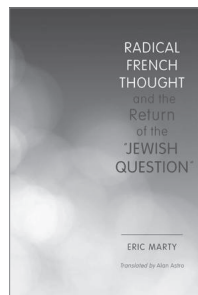
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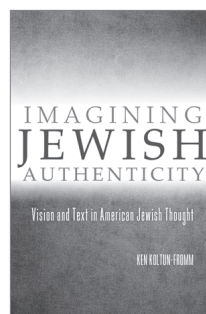
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Cluster 2. Modernity, Translation, and Jewishness

A Rich Language or a Bastard Tongue? Language Legitimacy and Ladino Translation

Devin E. Naar

Let those who say our language is impoverished eat crap [literally *halva*]. Is there a language richer than ours, which borrows from every possible language? To tell someone “Be quiet!”—in how many languages do we tell it to him?: *Shetika!*, *Silans!*, *Mudera!*, *Kurto!*, *Sopa!*, *Molche!*, *Pyedrelomos!*, *Sus!* (*La Akshyon*, December 5, 1938)

Published in a leading Jewish newspaper in Salonica on the eve of World War II, this colorful passage highlights the hybridity of languages—a phenomenon particularly accentuated in this instance. The author indicates that synonyms for “be quiet” in Judeo-Spanish (also known as Ladino and Judezmo) derived from “many languages”—Spanish, Hebrew, French, Greek, Bulgarian, and Turkish; Judeo-Spanish, from this perspective, constitutes a language comprised of many languages. This Judeo-Balkan or Judeo-Ottoman linguistic pastiche, which readily absorbed and domesticated loanwords, rendered boundaries between vocabulary inside and outside of the language particularly porous. The linguistic fusion inherent in all languages, but particularly visible in Judeo-Spanish, as in Yiddish, also provoked intense debate regarding the value and legitimacy of the language itself: should texts be translated into this hybrid tongue? Are those composed in such a language worthy of translation into others?

A standard designation for the language in American English, as adopted by the Library of Congress, the term “Ladino” refers to the process of translation itself, to the act of bridging cultural codes or sets of verbal signs. *Ladino* stems from the verb, *enladinar*, which means to render into a Latin-based language—that is, Judeo-Spanish—as opposed to the sacred tongue, Hebrew. The first texts rendered into Ladino, such as the Bible, in the sixteenth century, included word-for-word, or calque, translations from Hebrew. The most famous work of Ladino literature began to be published in 1730: the *Me’am*



Meam Loez (Salonica, 1826). From the personal collection of the author.

קונבירסאציען		
יידיש	אנגליש	אספאניש
גוטע עבנד, מיין פרוי	Good day, sir	גוט דעם טאג, סניור
גוטע מיטע, מיין פרוי	Good evening, madam	גוטעס עבנד, מיין פרוי
גוטע מורגן, מיין פרוי	Good morning, miss	גוטעס מורגן, מיין פרוי
גוטע נאכט, מיין פרוי	Good night	גוטעס נאכט, מיין פרוי
גוטע טאג, מיין פרוי	Good-by	גוטעס טאג, מיין פרוי
בוי גוטעס טאג?	How do you do?	בוי גוטעס טאג?
בוי ליבט מיין טאג?	How are you?	בוי ליבט מיין טאג?
איך גוט	I am well	איך גוט
איך דאנק דיך	I thank you	איך דאנק דיך
איך זען גוט	I am much obliged to you	איך זען גוט
איך פרייע דיך	I am glad	איך פרייע דיך
איך פרייע מיין פרוי	I am glad to see you	איך פרייע מיין פרוי
איך פרייע מיין פרוי	I am glad to meet you	איך פרייע מיין פרוי

“Conversational phrases in Ladino, English, English transliterated into rashi script, and Yiddish” [sic] from *Livro de Embezar* (New York, 1916), Ladino-English-Yiddish guidebook for Sephardic Jewish immigrants in America. Courtesy of the Sephardic Studies collection, University of Washington.

lo'ez, a Hebrew-titled series of rabbinical commentaries that made traditional Jewish teachings accessible to the Ottoman Jewish masses, including women, in a language they could more readily understand. The author of the first volume, Jacob Khuli, explained his process: “All the words of this book are translated from the Gemara and midrash. So that whatever is [written] there in the sacred tongue [Hebrew], I translated into a European language [Ladino].”

Embedded in the project of the *Me'am lo'ez* was a paradox. Khuli indicated that the language of his book, Ladino, was essentially foreign to him and to his readers. It was, as the title indicates, from “a foreign nation”; it was *franko* (“European”); it was, in effect, not a Jewish language but rather one adopted by Jews amidst their wandering in exile. But in order for common Jews to access Jewish teachings without knowing Hebrew, Khuli begrudgingly recognized that they could only do so in the purportedly non-Jewish language that they had come to speak. The act of rendering Jewish knowledge into Ladino, this allegedly foreign tongue written in Hebrew characters, ironically legitimized it as a Jewish language.

The success of the *Me'am lo'ez* paved the way for additional publication enterprises. A nineteenth-century neologism coined by Western observers and linguists to identify the vernacular of Ottoman Jews, the term “Judeo-Spanish,” which emphasizes but two of the language’s defining components, came to be adopted and naturalized by a new cohort of writers: Jewish journalists. Instead

of fretting over their constituents’ lack of understanding of religious texts, these new secular authors, inspired by the educational activities of the Paris-based Alliance Israélite Universelle, sought to ensure that their readers gain access to European literary, political, and cultural trends. They therefore “translated,” “summarized,” “imitated,” “adapted,” “arranged,” or “rewrote” French, Italian, German, or English works and tailored them to local tastes. Characters in the adaptation of *Gulliver’s Travels*, for example, drank *raki* (the anise-based aperitif). Judeo-Spanish writers also adapted major political treatises, from Marx to Herzl’s *The Jewish State*. Some writers rendered Ottoman law codes and histories into Judeo-Spanish in an effort to instruct their readers on how to become good Ottoman citizens. Other publishers translated American immigration laws and manuals that introduced prospective migrants to English and Yiddish—the purported American Jewish language. These translation initiatives dramatically impacted the nature of Judeo-Spanish. Newspapers

Method how to learn to read and write in Spanish-Hebrew or in English

שיטה פון איבערצעצן און שרייבן אין ספרדיש-אויף און אין אנגליש

English	English Char.	Spanish-Hebrew Hand written	Rabbinic or Rashi	Hebrew Characters
a	A	א	א	א
b	B	ב	ב	ב
w	W	ו	ו	ו
y	Y	י	י	י
ch	Ch	כ	כ	כ
d	D	ד	ד	ד
e	E	ה	ה	ה
a	A and of w	א ו	א ו	א ו
o	O	ו	ו	ו
z	Z	ז	ז	ז
i	I	י	י	י

“Method how to learn to read and write in Spanish-Hebrew or in English” [sic] from *Livro de Embezar* (New York, 1916), Ladino-English-Yiddish guidebook for Sephardic Jewish immigrants in America. Courtesy of the Sephardic Studies collection, University of Washington.

developed a stilted, westernized register of Judeo-Spanish, replete with Gallicisms, sometimes referred to as Judeo-Fragnoles. Taking cues from journalists, some rabbis even created “modern” Judeo-Spanish translations of sacred texts, such as the liturgy for the High Holidays, in order to awaken their congregants’ “sentiments of piety and devotion” otherwise absent from the chanting of incomprehensible Hebrew prayers.

The introduction of Western cultural and ideological trends into the Ottoman Jewish



Four-language dictionary published by the journal *El Pueblo* (Salonica, 1933). Reprinted by permission of The National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

world also brought a critique of the status and value of Judeo-Spanish. Anxieties no longer emerged because it appeared to be a “foreign tongue,” the issue that had preoccupied the author of the *Me'am lo'ez*, but now in an era of modern, purist nationalisms, because it came to be construed as something less than a language—a bastard tongue unworthy of literary creation. European and American observers disparaged not only this bastard tongue but also orientalized and diminished the entire culture of Sephardic Jews in the Ottoman Empire: “In the ‘old country’ they had no cultural life of their own worth speaking of. They had no common body of customs and traditions, no common literature, no knowledge of or curiosity about their past . . . They had been a back-ward people in a backward country . . .” (*The Forward*, July 25, 1926).

The Sephardic Jewish elite, internalizing the critique of their own culture, denigrated their language and viewed it as insufficient for the exigencies of modern life, perhaps suitable for derivative literature but not for original creation. As one journalist lamented, “Our language is nothing more than a jargon, an absolutely corrupt dialect and nothing more . . . a language that is not a language, an idiom with neither father nor mother and born on the afternoon of Tisha be-'Av” (*La Vara*, February 22, 1935). Seduced by a myth of the grandeur of medieval Spain, this writer advocated that his dialect be Castilianized—that non-Spanish and “oriental” elements be removed so that it may be “returned” to its proper European status. Others argued that the idiom be replaced altogether by the language of the state—Turkish, for example—or a language of European prestige, such as French. Leaders of the Zionist movement in the former Ottoman realm instead advocated for the adoption of what they perceived to

be the true Jewish national language, Modern Hebrew. Ironically, Jewish intellectuals engaged in sophisticated polemics over the “language question” as well as myriad political, cultural, and economic themes in Judeo-Spanish, the very language they deemed incapable of the task.

Others defended their *lingua madre*, such as the author with whom we began, who viewed the multiple linguistic elements comprising his Judeo-Spanish as a source of strength. They sometimes referred to *Judezmo* or *Djudyo*, terms that identified the language as specifically Jewish. The Ottoman authorities agreed with this characterization by referring to Judeo-Spanish, not Hebrew, as *Yahudice* (Jewish). The perception of the language as distinctly Jewish also resulted in humorous situations. When Argentine film arrived in the Balkans, those Jews who flocked to the cinema believed that they were viewing “Jewish” films because all of the actors appeared to speak “Jewish”—no subtitles were needed.

Pro-Judezmo activists, who eschewed nationalisms and embraced a cosmopolitan perspective, saw the hybridity of Judeo-Spanish

as endowing its speakers with ready-made connections to their neighbors that formed the building blocks of intercommunal cooperation. In places like Salonica, home to the largest Judeo-Spanish-speaking community, Jewish socialists promoted Judeo-Spanish as the language of the Jewish proletariat and designated it as the official language of social and economic discourse for the Socialist Workers’ Federation. Other activists, like journalist Sam Lévy, argued that those fluent in Judeo-Spanish were already on their way to understanding Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian, French, Italian, etc. This kind of empowering message emphasized that Judeo-Spanish possessed the capacity to translate the foreign into the domestic, to transform its speakers from outsiders to insiders in a variety of contexts. Translation became a process of building cultural bridges that contributed to the creation of a legitimate literature in Judeo-Spanish, including an array of original works. To further facilitate these linkages, Judeo-Spanish promoters created a number of multilingual dictionaries and

began assembling a major Ladino library at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in order to elevate the prestige of their language.

Mass migrations, assimilation, and ultimately, the destruction of the Holocaust, contributed to the dissolution of the Judeo-Spanish cultural world during the twentieth century. Now, in the twenty-first century, we have entered a third phase in Judeo-Spanish translation. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, authors rendered Hebrew sources into Judeo-Spanish, even if they initially perceived the latter as a “foreign tongue.” From the nineteenth into the twentieth centuries, a second phase of translation involved bringing modern European cultural trends into the Judeo-Spanish milieu that also introduced a new anxiety about the target language: that it was not a language at all, but rather a bastard tongue to be abandoned. Still others viewed it as a worthy vehicle for literary production and for building intercultural bridges. Now, in the twenty-first century, most of the estimated five to six thousand

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Judeo-Spanish publications remain unknown and inaccessible. While a few new translations of classics into Judeo-Spanish continue (*The Little Prince*, 2010; *The Odyssey*, 2012), a third phase now involves a move in the opposite direction: out of Judeo-Spanish into more accessible languages, such as English.

A flurry of recent initiatives have borne fruit: a translation of the first known Judeo-Spanish memoir; *Sephardi Lives*, a documentary history comprised of translations of 150 sources from Ladino (and a dozen other languages); and online

projects, such as the Sephardi Studies Project at Stanford, which offers translations of key Judeo-Spanish texts; and the University of Washington's new Sephardic Studies Digital Library and Museum, which offers digital versions of Judeo-Spanish sources along with annotations and anticipated translations. These endeavors seek to make Judeo-Spanish source materials accessible, in the original and in translation, for students and scholars, specialists and community members, in order to spark awareness of and interest in the Ladino cultural world and the

multiplicities of Jewish experiences. One who asserts that Judeo-Spanish constitutes an impoverished language lacking literature may finally be told: *Shetika! Silans! Mudera! Kurto! Sopa! Molche! Pyedrelomos! Sus!*

Devin E. Naar is assistant professor of Jewish Studies and History, and chair of the Sephardic Studies Program at the University of Washington. A former Fulbright scholar to Greece, Naar received his PhD in History from Stanford University and is completing a book about the history of Jews in Salonica.

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The Navel of the Dream: Freud's Jewish Languages

Naomi Seidman



Berggasse 19, Vienna (Freud's pre-1938 residence and present-day Museum). Photo by Wikipedia user lerner.hu.

In a 1982 article in the *New Yorker* on “Freud and Man’s Soul,” Bruno Bettelheim let loose what would become a tidal wave of criticism of Strachey’s Standard Version of Freud’s work, decrying the ways that Strachey had stripped Freud’s work of its humanistic, philosophical, and literary soul in favor of a pseudo-scientific jargon. For ordinary German words like *es*, *Ich*, or *Fehlleistung*, Strachey substituted Latinate, opaque neologisms like *id*, *ego*, and *parapraxis*, apparently in an effort to win psychoanalysis a place in the Anglo-American social sciences. This culture expected “neutrality” from its clinicians, signaled by a technical, specialized vocabulary. Psychoanalysis indeed achieved a place within the social sciences, but Bettelheim saw that acceptance had come at a price. As with Doctor Faustus, the price was no less than a man’s soul, the soul that

animated Freud in Vienna but which was lost—sold to the Mephistopheles of pseudo-scientificism—in his English exile and afterlife.

Bettelheim was not the first to charge that psychoanalysis had been lost in translation. In 1955, at a lecture in Vienna calling for “a return to Freud,” Jacques Lacan spoke movingly of the echoing of “the Freudian message . . . across the world from the great bell of Vienna . . . on the waves set up by the tocsin of hate, the tumult of discord, the panic-stricken breath of war.” The bearers of the Freudian message to the diaspora were compelled to abandon the European historical sensibility, the psychoanalytic commitment to bridging “modern man to the ancient myths,” because of a desire to assimilate to another culture. Freud’s exile from Vienna forced the exile of his thought from history itself, to the flatter horizons of the social

sciences. In the Standard Edition the world only mistakenly imagines itself in possession of a primary document of Freudian thought. As Sander Gilman writes, “After decades of reading Freud in English, Freud has become ‘Englished’ in our sensibility, just as the ‘real’ Bible is the King James translation.”

Such laments over the distortions that accompanied the Freudian diaspora are the requisite preludes to the lamenters’ recovery projects: Bettelheim aims to recover a humanist Freud of cultured European philosophical thought, accessible to an educated layperson. By contrast, Lacan insists that Freud’s contribution was precisely to *decenter* what he calls “a whole humanist tradition.” Jewish Studies critics like Gilman seek to return Freud to the Jewish *fin de siècle*. Such recovery projects very nearly define the study of Freud in the humanities,

in their insistence on the Ur-text behind the translation, the narrative Greek behind the scientific Latin, the philosopher behind the scientist, the Viennese Jew behind the Dead White European Male, the “Yid” behind the id.

There are religious echoes in all these endeavors: Psychoanalysis followed a trajectory from a small Jewish movement to one open to non-Jews, eventually becoming an international movement with universal claims; this drama was enacted within a world-shaking cataclysm from which the psychoanalytic good news was rescued, despite the destruction of the Jewish centers from which it emerged. The message, though, was dependent on the necessarily imperfect medium of translation; the anxieties of translation were initially relieved by the canonization of a “standard” translation; nevertheless, this translation was soon subjected to accusations of inaccuracy. Our own era has seen the inevitable attempts at recovering an Ur-text that could provide access to the founder’s own words. Many others have pointed out that Freud was the founder of a religion; my point is that he was also the founder of a religion-*in-translation*.

The dream of a Freud still undisturbed by translation might be subjected to psychoanalytic interpretation or—better—to psychoanalytic translation theory. Such a theory would recognize Freud’s peculiar fondness for translation metaphors, his use of the terms *Übersetzung* and *Übertragung* to describe dreams, symptoms, phobias, slips of the tongue, fetishes, the choice of suicidal means, transference (*Übersetzungsliebe!*), and psychoanalysis itself. Translation is everywhere in psychoanalysis, the very connective tissue linking its more famous components. Freud mobilized, however, not the primary but rather the *secondary* meaning of the term as transposition, displacement: only the *difference* between forbidden thought and symptom, dream, or joke allows the thought to evade psychic censorship. Such a view of translation is characteristic of the rabbinic translation narrative, which imagines the Bible in Greek not as a perfect equivalent to the Hebrew but as shaped by the pressures of imperial censorship.

The problem of translation and censorship rises to the surface in one joke Freud analyzed:

The doctor, who has been asked to look after the baroness at her confinement, pronounced that the moment had not

come, and suggested to the baron that in the meantime they should have a game of cards in the next room. After a while a cry of pain from the baroness struck the ears of the two men: “*Ah, mon dieu, que je souffre!*” Her husband sprang up, but the doctor signaled to him to sit down: “It’s nothing. Let’s go on with the game!” A little later there were again sounds from the pregnant woman: “*Mein Gott, mein Gott, what terrible pains!*” “Aren’t you going in, Doctor?” asked the baron. “No, no. It’s not time yet.” At last there came from next door an unmistakable cry of “*Aa—ee, aa-ee, aa-ee!*” The doctor threw down his cards and exclaimed: “*Now it’s time.*”

In many versions of this joke, the baroness calls out “*Oy vey iz mir.*” What Freud describes as the breakthrough of the repressed “primitive nature” of the woman under the pressure of labor is, in more openly Jewish versions, the breakthrough of the repressed Yiddish from its “genteel” linguistic concealment. Jokes in which a repressed Jewishness breaks through a “civilized” façade are indeed recognizable joke types expressing the anxieties of acculturation.

Freud’s concealment of the Yiddish in this joke reminds us that the question of translation-as-assimilation does not begin with Freud’s exile from occupied Vienna, but rather with his father’s migration from Galicia to Vienna. It is this earlier migration that figures in the peculiarly Jewish psychopathologies that are the subject of psychoanalysis, and suggests that Freud’s writings are *already* lost to us in translation, in Vienna as in New York.

The laboring woman is thus a Jewish self-translator, who translates from falsity to truth, from the façade of a Gentile tongue to the marrow of primary speech. Such a trajectory deviates from traditional notions of translation, which assume that what comes first is closest to being true, and that what comes later is increasingly faded, secondary and false. If the baroness complicates the usual trajectory of translation, so does psychoanalysis, which also assumes that what presents itself first to view—a symptom, joke, dream—is both a falsifying evasion of a truer latent content and destined to undergo further falsifications in its retelling and interpretation.

If this joke is an allegory for psychoanalysis in translation, then what do these figures represent? If the baroness is a

displacement for Freud, he is also the husband who holds back, playing his Jewish cards close to the chest. Freud may also be the doctor, whose clinical skills plumb not the body but rather the shifting ratios between language and truth, the pace of contractions translated into the ladder of European languages. Freud famously described every dream as having a “navel” that resisted interpretation. This joke lets us glimpse not a navel but a door closed against a birth, which we are invited to imagine but forbidden from seeing. The woman’s cry is only language, translating pain, subject to interpretation. Even reduced to her “essence,” this pretentious, laughable, suffering woman remains intact and unknowable, a screen for the social anxieties she embodies and displaces.

The recovery of a not-yet-translated Freud aims not only to discover an original Freud but also to strip away the veils that have kept him from us. But this desire to undo translation, to recover a pristine meaning untouched by assimilation, is itself a form of aggression, as Freud the joke teller / gynecologist gives us the tools to see. We are in an era of retranslation, but what coming “closer” to Freud’s native tongue might look like remains unclear: What is Freud’s “original” text—what he wrote in German or what he concealed in it?

In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud suggests that Moses’s “speech defect” may have been a function of his Egyptian origins, and that the leader of the Israelites was also a non-native speaker of Hebrew. If so, the Hebrew Bible is another text, like the New Testament, that fails to provide us with the *ipsissima verba* of its founding figure. Like the Bible, psychoanalysis may already be a translation, in which the words we seek were gone before they could be spoken. We may follow the pressures that shaped this translation, but we cannot expect to hope to fix a sacred text immune from the pressures of translation, which is to say, from the closed door, the split self, our own pain expressed in the cries of the other.

Naomi Seidman is Koret Professor of Jewish Culture and director of the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. Her publications include Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation (University of Chicago Press, 2006) and The Marriage Plot: Sexuality, Secularization and the Emergence of Jewish Literature (forthcoming).

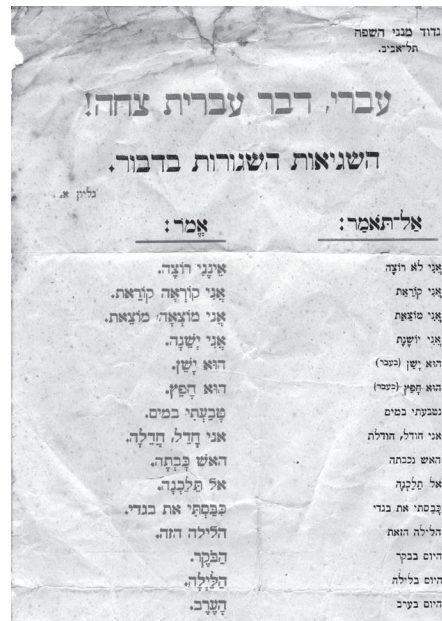
The Multilingual Backdrop of the Fight for Hebrew

Liora R. Halperin

In November 1927, David Shapiro, editor of the New York Yiddish newspaper *Der Tog*, donated funds to establish a Yiddish chair at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Though Chancellor Judah L. Magnes, from California, initially accepted the offer, the faculty of the university's Institute for Jewish Studies was deeply divided. After a sustained public polemic against the chair by the Hebrew popular press and several faculty members, the university abandoned the proposal in early 1928: Yiddish would not have a formal place at the Hebrew University until 1951.

Taken on its face, this episode seems to exemplify the ways in which pro-Hebrew activism in interwar Palestine helped move the Yishuv from the multilingual situation characteristic of the Jewish Diaspora to the coalescence of a unified national ethos around Hebrew. Looked at more closely, however, instances of activism like this one contain within them clues about a more complex linguistic reality, one less detached than it might seem from political and cultural patterns usually associated with the Diaspora, that is, the presumed opposite of the new society being created by Jews in Palestine.

During the years between World War I and World War II, Modern Hebrew went through a spectacular transformation, from a language of ritual that had recently also become a language of modern literature, to a widely used vernacular. But that success obscured a second set of linguistic facts: the particular framework of relations in Palestine in the years following World War I was not conducive to the kind of linguistic uniformity found in countries like France, Germany, or England, places which would serve for Zionists as the ideal models of a language-nation linkage. The British held a League of Nations mandate over a territory that was primarily inhabited by Palestinian Arabs, who, over the course of this period, were developing a coherent and fervent opposition to both the British Empire and Zionism. Moreover, the currents of Jewish migration that would reshape the demographics of Europe and the Americas also touched Palestine and made its Jewish community ever more diverse and multilingual. Jews living under a foreign colonial-style system, challenged



Courtesy of the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipal Archive.

by natives unhappy with apparent Jewish privilege, demographically destabilized by immigration: these are the currents of modern Jewish history writ large. During the years of the British Mandate, such patterns would not be wholly broken but rather revisited, albeit on new terms and in a new setting.

We can observe the dynamics of the Yishuv's multilingualism in archival documents surrounding the very instances of activism that appear on the surface to negate its possibility. Let's take for instance the episode with which we began. On November 18, 1927, Menachem Ussishkin, one of the most outspoken opponents of the Yiddish chair and an advisor to the militant Brigade of the Defenders of the Hebrew Language, wrote a letter to his colleague, the pro-Hebrew scholar Josef Klausner. In it he included a copy of a telegram he intended to send to Chancellor Magnes to warn him against the proposed Yiddish chair. The telegram read, in English, as follows (sic): "As friend University and yourself beg you relinquish Yiddish chair whatever the conditions. Huge outburst being organised severer than Hilfsverein. Whoever triumphs ruin certain. Withdraw prior kingdling battle." In what followed in the accompanying letter, Ussishkin appended a Russian proverb:

Bog ne vydash, svin'ya ne s'yest (God willing, everything will be alright, literally: God will not betray, pigs will not gobble it up).

No less than five different languages are involved or invoked in this exchange: the communication between Ussishkin and Klausner is in Hebrew; the controversy at hand pertains to Yiddish; the telegram, written in English, references the Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden, the organization that proposed German-language teaching at the Haifa technical university in 1913, provoking a public outcry; and Ussishkin's proverb is in Russian.

What do we make of all this? To begin with, it is significant that the language of the exchange, like most professional exchanges between committed Zionists in Palestine at this time, is in Hebrew. As a result of this fact, Zionist archives seem often to reflect a society that had fully transitioned to Hebrew as a language of both administration and daily usage. The embedded content of the exchange, however, betrays both lingering anxieties about other languages as well as structural limitations on the reach of Hebrew.

If the telegram to Chancellor Magnes uses militant language, the private correspondence between the two pro-Hebrew activists suggests they were aware that this might not be a battle easily won. Moreover, they must have known that the model of Hebrew success they invoked to threaten Magnes, the Hilfsverein controversy, had not yielded uncomplicated victory. Yes, in 1914, the Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden, proposing a technical university in Haifa that that would eventually become the Technion, yielded to demands that all subjects, including scientific ones, be taught in Hebrew. But by the late 1920s, German was still the dominant spoken language of the Hebrew University. Professors did not always embrace Hebrew: complaints surfaced that the corridors of the Hebrew University were indistinguishable from the university halls of Charlottenburg. Moreover, scholars continued producing academic work in German and, over time, in English, understanding that these languages were the coin of the global marketplace of ideas. Behind confident pro-Hebrew demands lay a more anxious recognition that Hebrew exclusivity, though symbolic of a nation coming into

being, could not sever the global bonds that would continue to influence the language choices of Jews in Palestine: not only the academic elite, but also businessmen looking for contacts abroad, clerks facilitating import-export operations, and immigrants nostalgic for the high culture of their home countries.

Some of those contacts would invariably be in English. Bureaucratic contacts with British offices compelled some middle-class Jews in Palestine to attempt to burnish their English skills to get a decent job; even militantly pro-Hebrew institutions such as the Tel Aviv Municipality had English-speaking clerks. Some of the English-based correspondence was between Zionists: here the English-speaking Judah Magnes was (ironically) in charge of determining whether a Yiddish chair would be established at the university or whether Hebrew would (ostensibly anyway) reign supreme. That Ussishkin and Klausner deemed it necessary to voice their pro-Hebrew linguistic agenda in broken English (a product of British telegraph policies) reminds us that above the fractious interplay between Hebrew and Yiddish loomed global language pressures that neither the Yishuv nor the State of Israel could escape.

Moreover, the most intimate part of the exchange between Ussishkin and Klausner, the hope that things would turn out all right, was expressed in Russian. Russian was not the mother tongue of either man, nor the language of local power, but rather the language of their former host culture: the Russian Empire. Russian was the language of an effort (by non-Jews and some Jews) to assimilate Jews into a new modern high culture. It was also the language of a local non-Jewish culture rooted in Russian Orthodoxy. This particular expression (about God and pigs) is both explicitly Christian and suggestively *treyf*. But it was part of the multivalent world of language that intellectuals like Ussishkin and Klausner could draw upon as they planned their attack strategy against Yiddish and in favor of Hebrew.

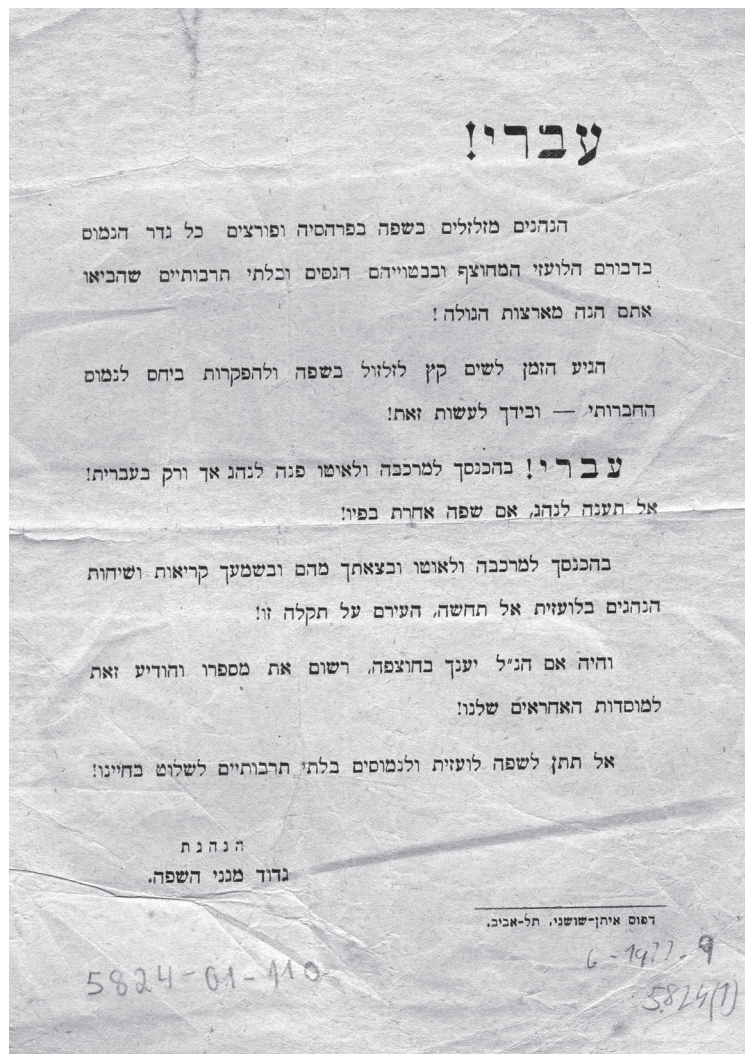
The telegram encapsulates an Ashkenazic Zionist story characterized by squabbling over the merits of Hebrew, German, Yiddish, and Russian and ultimately finding places for all of them in the Hebrew-dominant society of the Yishuv. Behind this story, however, was a local controversy about the local Arabic-speaking context. As it happens, both Klausner and Ussishkin, five years earlier, had sat on a committee to discuss founding a School of Oriental Studies at the Hebrew

University (it would eventually be founded in 1927). Klausner had suggested that “The Hebrew language demands knowledge of the Semitic languages, the development of the Oriental spirit, and therefore one of the first things needs to be the opening of the Department of Oriental Studies . . .” Debates about the purpose of Arabic would occupy many educators, including those who rejected teaching European foreign languages in the schools. Was Arabic necessary for students because of its similarity to Hebrew? Was it a means of promoting good relations with Palestinian Arabs? Was it a way to negotiate an inherently violent encounter? An exchange about one subset of languages, complex enough on its own, might remind us of the even broader field of language questions with which this society contended.

Klausner and Ussishkin’s leadership of a movement to block the creation of a

Yiddish chair at the Hebrew University, sensational as it was, was thus only the tip of an iceberg of multilingual pressures, conflicts, and challenges; the majority of which lay beneath the surface of official pro-Hebrew rhetoric. But dig deeper, into the correspondence, institutional archives, and memoirs, and a more complex picture begins to emerge. A society claiming and striving to break from its past was still engaged in a set of diverse language challenges and intercultural connections that had long been—and would continue to be—characteristic of the Jewish people.

Liora R. Halperin is assistant professor of History and Jewish Studies at the University of Colorado–Boulder. Her book, Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920–1948, was published by Yale University Press in 2015.



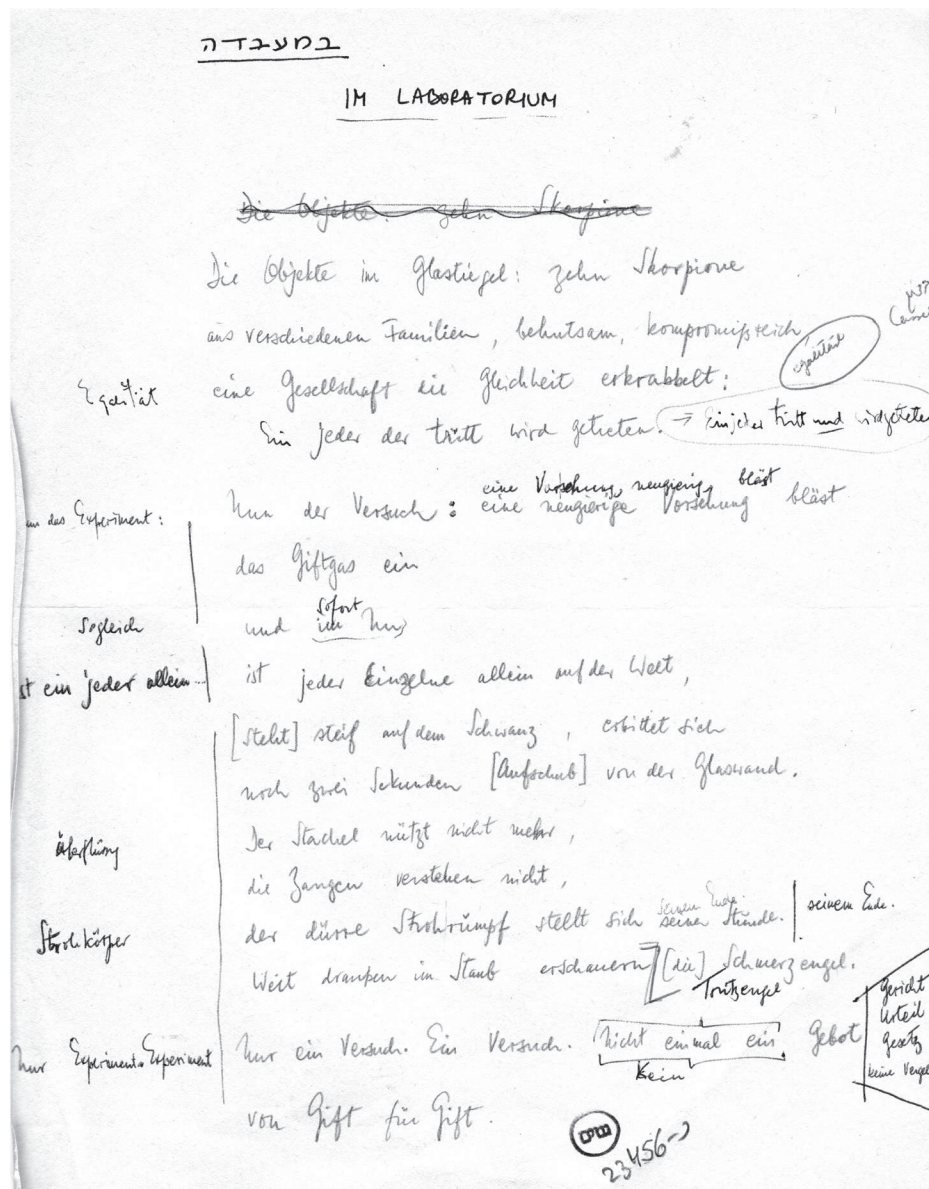
Courtesy of the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipal Archive.

The Translator's Laboratory: A Draft from the Dan Pagis Archive

Na'ama Rokem

The suspicion that translation is a form of betrayal is often heightened when it comes to poetry. But what happens when the translator and the poet are one and the same; that is, when the poem is written twice by the same author, in two different languages? What would a “faithful translation” mean in this case, and who might be betrayed? Can the self-translator “get it wrong” at all? The document presented here—an archived draft of a German translation that the Israeli poet Dan Pagis prepared of his poem “In the Laboratory,” a poem that describes an uncanny experiment in which a vial full of scorpions is injected with poisonous gas—raises these questions and others.

Pagis is not simply a self-translator, but a translator who is—in some sense—bringing the text “back” into his first language, under particularly fraught historical circumstances. He was born in 1930 in Radautz, in the region of Bukovina, a former province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (today it is in northeastern Romania) and raised in a German-speaking environment. When he arrived in mandatory Palestine in 1946, a teenager who had survived the Holocaust, Pagis quickly replaced his first language—which had become the language of the perpetrators—with Hebrew. In this adopted language, Pagis became a poet and a literary scholar of acute linguistic sensitivity. But the archive reveals that Pagis did not leave the German language entirely behind him. For example, as the editors of his collected poems note, Pagis turned to German in annotating and organizing the drafts of the prose poems posthumously collected and published under the title “Father.” In those drafts, the German language seems to represent some kind of superego that hovers above the poems, marking them as *zu süß* (too sweet) and planning their arrangement in a future publication. In other cases, Pagis’s German seems to constitute a subtext or a linguistic unconscious that lurks beneath the Hebrew text. Anne Birkenhauer, one of Pagis’s German translators, has argued that her translations bring such subtexts to light, revealing alliterations and wordplays that constitute a kind of German shadow to the Hebrew poem. An opposite example is the poem “Draft of



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a Reparations Agreement,” which responds to the German term *Wiedergutmachung* (literally: making good again) by ironically promising that “Everything will be returned to its place / [. . .] The scream back into the throat. / The gold teeth back to the gums. / The terror.” As Birkenhauer notes, Pagis’s wry comment on the German terminology

remains implicit in the Hebrew version of the poem and becomes explicit only when it is translated into German.

The draft of Pagis’s self-translation presented here suggests a third possibility for thinking about the relationship between the two languages in his writing, with implications for translation theory and for the

understanding of the historical relationship between his two languages, German and Hebrew. The German version of “In the Laboratory” does not exist before the Hebrew one, nor is it a correction or annotation of it. In fact, it is not a known entity, but rather a series of crossroads that offer multiple possibilities, questions rather than answers. The document gives us a glimpse of translation as a *process* rather than a *product*, highlighting the contingent nature of this pursuit. Contingency is an apt keyword also for thinking about this document in relation to German Jewish history and the history of linguistic and cultural contact between German and Hebrew. In the suspended translation process, the different possibilities that attend it left open, the reader finds a space between German and Hebrew that is not governed by the teleology of the history of the survivor, as it is often told in the Israeli context. In that conventional narrative, German had to be abandoned in the wake of the Nazi destruction, and Hebrew was its inevitable inheritor. Pagis’s incomplete translation, with its divergent possibilities, opens a space of multiple contingent paths rather than one inevitable one. In other words, a consideration of this draft of a translation entails also a consideration of the nature of history and of the unfolding of human lives within it.

“In the Laboratory” describes a curious and morbid experiment:

The data in the glass beaker:
a dozen scorpions
of various species—a
swarming, compromising
society of egalitarians. Trampling
and trampled upon.
Now the experiment: an
inquisitive creator blows
the poison gas inside
and immediately
each one is alone in the world

The poem does not explain the nature of the laboratory in which this experiment takes place, nor does it describe the response of the “inquisitive creator” who works in it or what this person ultimately learns. Instead, the stakes of the experiment are hinted at through the biblical and rabbinic language Pagis employs. The scorpions are a *minyán*, and the curious observer who poisons them is described as a divine intervener, casting the experiment as an encounter between God and the community who prays to him. We do not

learn of the results of the experiment, and the only response to it registered in the poem, apart from the death throes of the scorpions themselves, comes from an unexpected direction:

Far away, in the dust, the sinister angels
are startled.
It’s only an experiment. An experiment.
Not a judgement of poison for poison.

In Hebrew, the “sinister angles” are described with a pun not as *mala’akhei ha-sharet* (the traditional designation for the ministering angels) but rather as *mala’akhei ha-karet* (the angels of destruction). The poem ends with a reassurance: this is just an experiment not an application of biblical retributive justice in the form of “poison for poison.”

The poem does not follow a regular scheme of meter or rhyme, but sound and rhythm play a crucial role in its composition. Both of these elements are combined to draw attention to the immediate consequences of the infusion of gas into the vial. First, Pagis inserts a break: the only short line of the poem, consisting of the single, trisyllabic Hebrew word for “and immediately.” This change of pace is followed by a series of fricative *het* sounds in the line that describes the isolation into which the scorpions fall in this tense moment. Before we attend to the weight of this moment, first a comment about the translation.

One detail of Pagis’s German translation confirms Birkenhauer’s argument that his poems are sometimes more explicit in his first language than in the language in which they were written. Whereas Hebrew provides him with a neutral expression for the substance injected into the vial—*’ed* rather than *gaz*—which would also have been a possibility—in German he uses the term *Giftgas*, emphasizing the analogy between the experiment in the poem and the gassing of Jews by Nazis. In this light, the theological and moral language invoked in the poem powerfully raises some questions that are confronted in other poems by Pagis as well: if there is a divine intervener, how could such horror take place? How can one reconcile between the genocidal violence of the Nazis and the fact that they were seemingly rational, scientifically minded people? And, short of an impossible retributive retaliation to genocide, what is a viable moral response?

But if this translation decision seems to clarify or explicate an element of the poem, other parts of the draft emphasize the indeterminate relationship between the text and its translation. The draft, which is titled in both Hebrew and German, consists of several layers in pencil and in blue, green, and black pens, suggesting several phases of revision and correction. Pagis considers various lexical alternatives, such as the Latinate “experiment” as a replacement for the Germanic word *Versuch*, or the different options for “immediately”: *sofort*, *sogleich*, and *im nu*. But of course, in these cases as in others, the decisions that the poet-translator is weighing also have prosodic implications. This seems to be an important motivation behind his dilemma between two slightly different options for describing the “inquisitive creator” behind the experiment: “*eine neugierige Vorsehung*” and “*eine Vorsehung, neugierig*.” The most substantial effect of the reordering is arguably the loss of one syllable. Another example is Pagis’s consideration of “*ist ein jeder allein*” as an alternative for the lengthier “*ist jeder Einzelne allein*” in the line that describes the fateful moment in which the group of scorpions is broken down to isolated individuals, a choice between six and eight syllables.

It may be that Pagis was looking for the best equivalent for the rhythmic patterns that govern his Hebrew poem, seeking to replicate the break and its aftermath. But in his translation-experiment, one might also read an answer, or a complement, to the vision of the poem. Instead of asking what must inevitably happen in this one fateful moment of the experiment, the draft of the translation asks what are the multiple, contingent forms in which the moment might be described, highlighting the nature of translation itself as an open-ended experiment. The confined space of the vial is thus opened up to a freedom of alternatives afforded by self-translation.

Na’ama Rokem is assistant professor in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. Her book, Prosaic Conditions: Heinrich Heine and the Spaces of Zionist Literature, was published by Northwestern University Press in 2013. She is currently working on two projects: an account of the encounter between Yehuda Amichai and Paul Celan in Jerusalem in 1969 and a history of comparative literary studies at the Hebrew University from 1925 to 1970.



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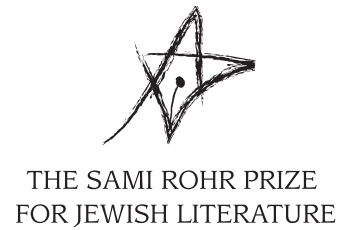
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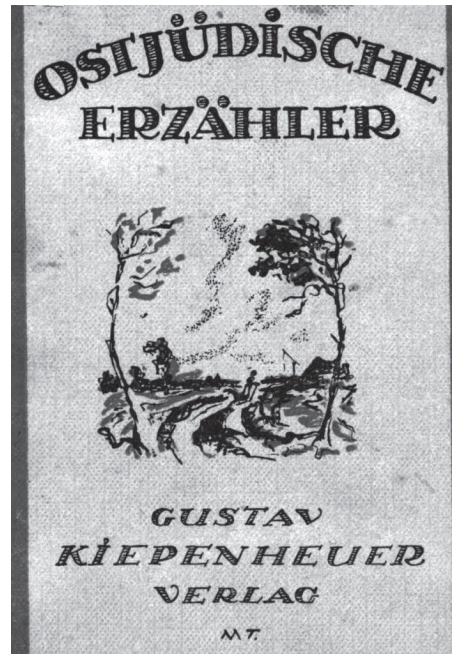
Yiddish in Germany(s): Alexander Eliasberg's Translations and Their Postwar Revivals

Emma Woelk

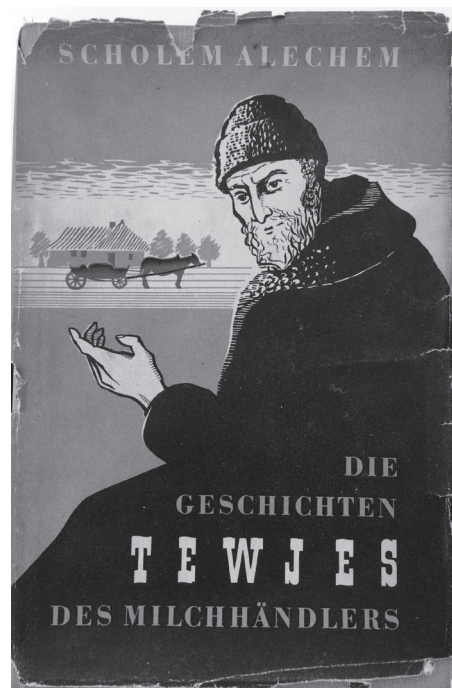
In 1917 a young Gerhardt Scholem, who later would rise to fame as a scholar of Jewish mysticism using the Hebrew name Gershom, published an article in the *Jüdische Rundschau* with the title “On the Problem of Translating from Yiddish.” Scholem’s article, which typified the increasing interest in Yiddish among German Jews during this period, provides a general discussion of the difficulties associated with translating Yiddish literary works into German. In this context, he singles out the work of Alexander Eliasberg (1878–1924) for attack. Scholem notes that while many may welcome Eliasberg’s translations simply because of an enthusiasm for “everything having to do with Jewish things,” he cannot follow suit. For Scholem, Eliasberg “lacks any real relationship to his objects” and his translations lack all authenticity. Despite Scholem’s derision, however, it was Eliasberg whose work reintroduced Yiddish literature to a new generation of German readers after the Second World War. Eliasberg’s translations from the Yiddish helped shape the way in which Jewish culture was presented in both East and West Germany and how the two German states represented their own relationship to this culture.

In the early twentieth century many German Jewish intellectuals and artists, Scholem among them, became fascinated by their eastern European coreligionists. The East, and with it Yiddish, was perceived as exotic and as “authentic” by “assimilated” German Jews. In this environment, Eliasberg’s translations reached large audiences, but were subject to withering criticism for their perceived inability to capture the “local color” of the Yiddish-speaking shtetl, as German Expressionist Alfred Lemm wrote.

Lemm, like Scholem, also reviewed Eliasberg’s work. In his 1917 review of Eliasberg’s *Ostjüdische Erzähler* (Eastern Jewish storytellers), which appeared in the *Neue Jüdische Monatshefte*, Lemm argues that the translator, for the sake of clarity, removed from the stories too many of the “echoes of *Jargon*.” Here, Lemm uses a term for Yiddish that was common at the time and which hints at the status of the language. Lemm



Cover of Alexander Eliasberg. *Ostjüdische Erzähler*: Y. L. Peretz, Scholem Alechem, Scholem Asch (Weimar: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1917).



Cover of Scholem Alechem. *Die Geschichten Tewjes des Milchhändlers* [The Stories of Tevye the Dairyman], German translation by Alexander Eliasberg (Berlin: Harz, 1921).

adds that this sacrifice was hardly necessary, as many of Eliasberg’s German readers were quite familiar with the “tones” of Yiddish. Indeed, both the influx of eastern European immigrants to German cities beginning in the late nineteenth century and the increased contact with this population during World War I contributed to the growing visibility of Yiddish culture in German cities. The readers whom Lemm had in mind very likely did have some familiarity with Yiddish, or at least with German imitations thereof. However limited some of this contact may have been, it is undoubtedly greater than that of Eliasberg’s readers after World War II. And following the near destruction of Yiddish language and culture during the Holocaust, discussions surrounding the subtleties of German-Yiddish translation hardly found any traction.

Much more surprising than postwar readers’ willingness to ignore Scholem and Lemm’s criticisms is the fact that Eliasberg had postwar readers at all. Despite the fact that a majority of Eliasberg’s readership had either been killed or forced into exile during the Second World War, his books were published in both postwar German states for new generations of German readers. Not only was this readership largely non-Jewish, it also conceived of the divide between the East and West in a radically different way from Eliasberg’s prewar readers. While an image of the exotic, Jewish East had once fueled German Jewish interest in Yiddish culture, the postwar world was divided along different lines. No longer were Eliasberg’s readers and publishers primarily concerned with a perceived cleft between Eastern and Western Jewry, but instead with the division between the Eastern and Western worlds as defined by Cold War politics. Scholem’s interest in how Yiddish could best be translated into German was replaced by concern about how each German state could best position itself politically by celebrating Yiddish literature in a way that furthered that state’s own self-image.

The first postwar publication of one of Eliasberg’s translations from Yiddish, which was also the first postwar German publication of any work of Yiddish fiction,

appeared in 1955, when the East German publishing house Volk und Welt released Eliasberg's translation of the Tevye stories by the most famous of all Yiddish writers, Sholem Aleichem (Shalom Rabinovitz). This was shortly followed by several West German reprintings of Eliasberg's translations from Yiddish, including three distinct collections in the 1960s alone. The forewords and editors' notes that accompanied these translations, along with the reviews of books related to Yiddish from this same time period, reflect an interest in translation that was geared not toward the communication of linguistic nuance in a foreign language but toward the fashioning of this literature into a memorial.

In both East and West Germany, Eliasberg's texts were celebrated as portals into a lost world. No longer were the texts meant to convey the specifics of a Yiddish literary original, but rather to paint, in broad strokes, a comprehensive picture of a world destroyed by the Holocaust. A 1962 West German publication of Eliasberg's translations of stories by the classic Yiddish writers Sholem Aleichem, Y. L. Peretz, and Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh, for example, was

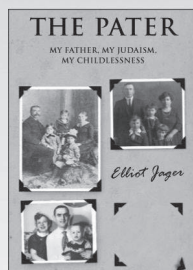
accompanied by an introduction reminding readers that literary depictions of eastern European Jewry are "all the more justified" by the fact that this world was destroyed in the Holocaust. A similar collection published in East Germany two years later defines and emphasizes its own importance through an editor's note claiming, "This world has completely disappeared; it is alive only in literature. This volume shows how the people who lived there felt, lived and thought."

East and West Germans conceived of their roles in the revival of this literature in strikingly different ways. West Germans stressed the contemporary suppression of Jewish culture in Eastern Europe and the fostering of this culture by their allies in New York. The standard East German narrative emphasized the continued presence of Yiddish in Eastern Bloc countries and the roles played by the United States and Israel in the decline of Yiddish after the Holocaust. Yiddish literary translations, therefore, became more than memorials to a lost culture. They became emblematic of the way in each German state defined itself against not only the Nazi past, but also against the other.

The German Jewish theorist Walter Benjamin famously wrote that translations give a literary text a type of afterlife. The reframing of the Eliasberg translations of Yiddish literary classics in the postwar era, with its emphasis on memorial and revival, certainly capitalized on this potential. But these particular texts, translations reframed for new environments, also suggest that multiple afterlives are possible. Looking at the history of Eliasberg's translations from Yiddish into German, we see clearly that translations can take on afterlives of their own. The changing significance of these "revivals" had nothing to do with changes to the translation itself, but to the environment in which this literature was introduced and the role these texts then played in the process of identity formation for new audiences.

Emma Woelk received her PhD from the Carolina-Duke Graduate Program in German Studies in May 2015. She is assistant professor of German at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas. Her primary interests include Yiddish within German culture and postwar literature.

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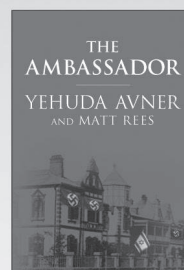


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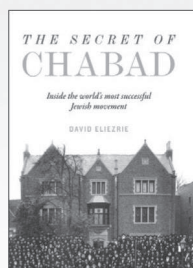
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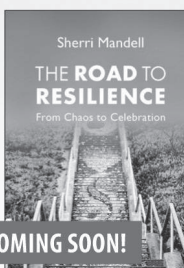
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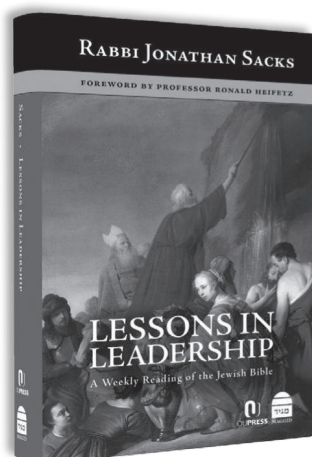
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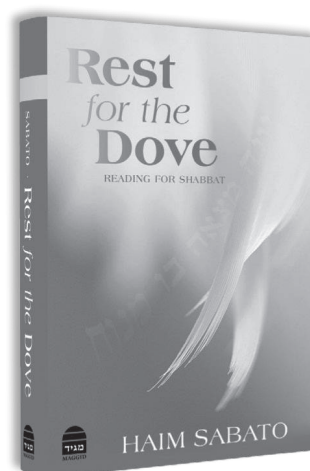


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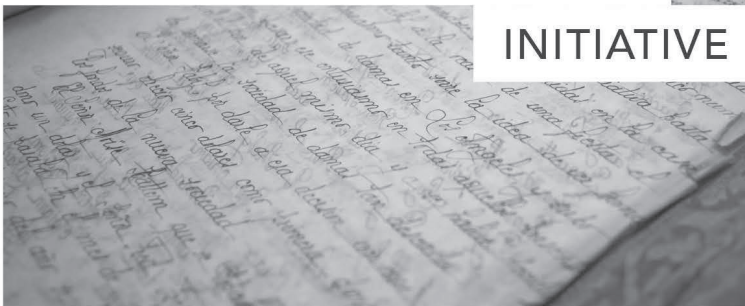
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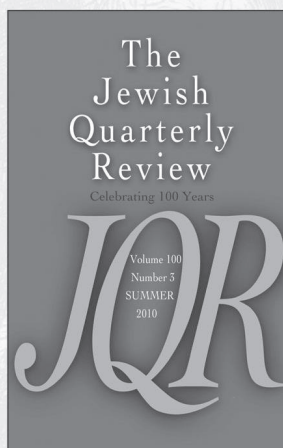
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Yes, but Is It Still Funny in English? Translating Jewish Comedy

Jeremy Dauber

Translation is absolutely vital to Jewish comedy. It is also absolutely deadly to it.

Let's begin with the obvious: the vicissitudes of Jewish multilingualism, historically speaking, allow for the development of a strong and broad stream of comedy based on wit and wordplay centered around translation. Whether this be the Yiddish glosses Tevye the dairyman puts on the Hebrew snatches of liturgy he quotes—glosses that are not literal translations, but ironic commentary of the highest order—or jokes rendering the whole world subject to the scrim of Jewish linguistic perspective (Why did the Jews settle in Poland? Because when they arrived, they said *po-lin*, here we stay), Jews were able to constantly create comedy around translatability. And if we move slightly into the realm of translation as metaphor, rather than glossing, the floodgates open wide: whether it's translating the Jew as stereotype for a mass culture audience, like Woody Allen or Mel Brooks, or rendering a Jewish voice previously heard most pungently in a Jewish language into a non-Jewish one (one could almost imagine, for example, a small line at the bottom of the title page of *Portnoy's Complaint* noting it had been translated from the original Yiddish).

But, of course, the humor of Jewish translation also encompassed its flip side, untranslatability. Part of the joke was about the aggression of making sure others *didn't* get it: whether it be the Borscht Belt comics who slipped into Yiddish for their punch lines, twitting the young acculturated for the benefit of their parents, or the elite writers of the Jewish Enlightenment, hinging their satirical points on a subtle misreading of Proverbs that would have gone over the head of almost all their readers. In each of these cases, providing an effective translation, via footnote or whispering to your partner in the seat next to you, ruins the joke's effect, its vitality—and yes, textual comedy can be vital, too; as long as you're in the

life-world where those texts deeply matter.

But, of course, many of them *don't* matter anymore. Comedy has the dubious distinction of staling quickly: if satire is indeed what closes on Saturday night, then what of the satire of the Enlightenment, whose battles, at least for most of us and our readers, have been largely over and done with for many years? (If you want to take the position that these battles are far from over, there are plenty of other cases to choose from: the anti-idolatry satire of the biblical prophets, which has successfully translated the notion of idol worship from a complex milieu of pagan spirituality to the spectacle of a bunch of morons worshipping sticks and stones.) And so any translation is by definition doomed to failure, lacking, as it must, the urgency and vitality that gave that comedy its punch, its effect: and without that, what is it?

(I won't even dwell on the banal, but crucial, difficulties in rendering the actual material itself in translation: the risk of failing to find equivalently comically resonant equivalents, and the humility any of us feel at trying to do so with texts produced by masters of the comic form. I suspect I'm not the only one who's looked at a translation they've produced and said this, or the equivalent: "Well, it's funny . . . but it's not *Sholem Aleichem* funny." I mean this both in terms of quality and in terms of rendering the particular style and sensibility of that author. It's a deflating, if perhaps inevitable, feeling, and to keep myself—and perhaps my readers—from feeling too bad, I'm going to move on.)

We can even suggest that the history of the reception of some works of Jewish comedy is a history of mistranslation—if we take that word to refer to properties of form and genre, not just content—and here's where we as scholars are put on notice. If the book of Jonah is, as numerous scholars suggest, a parody of the prophetic mission, rather than an account of one itself, then its placement in the Yom Kippur liturgy would have occasioned snickers and guffaws quite different from

those originally intended by its authors.

The processes we engage in of reverential treatment of our past—whether it be the sacralizing tendencies of traditionally minded Jews toward canonizing every text or the sacralizing tendencies of scholars to impute deep meaning to every statement—may be dangerous to the spirit of play that capers at the heart of comedy. Translation, in short, is, in the academy at least, a serious enterprise, as it should be; and it's hard to be deeply serious and keep your sense of humor about you.

Hard, but not impossible; and our field has been blessed with a wide variety of academics, translators, and academic translators who are attuned to the lively play of language in Jewish texts and who do their utmost to fight against these literary and scholarly entropies. (Call it Larry David's Fourth Law of Thermodynamics: absent outside effort, everything, in the end, approaches being unfunny.) But if a common theme in a translation issue is both translation's necessity and its dangers, comedy seems to illuminate that more than much else.

There's a famous, perhaps *the* famous, Jewish joke—it's the one told by Olsvanger at the beginning of his iconic joke collection, *L'Chayyim*—about the number of times different people, including a Jew, laugh when you tell them a joke. But I'm not going to tell it here. For one thing, it takes too long to set up. And then I'd have to explain it. And I'd probably have to say something about how it appears in different variants . . .

Translating jokes is hard, is what I'm saying. That's my point.

Still glad we're doing it, though. It's better than the alternative.

Jeremy Dauber is the Atran Professor of Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture at Columbia University, where he directs its Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies. His most recent book is The Worlds of Sholem Aleichem: The Remarkable Life and Afterlife of the Man Who Created Tevye (Schocken, 2013).

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Questionnaire

What is the role of language study in the undergraduate Jewish Studies curriculum?

Naomi Brenner

Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, The Ohio State University

One hundred years ago, Jewish life was full of debates over languages. At the Czernowitz Language Conference in 1908, attendees argued about what the Jewish national language should be, Yiddish or Hebrew. In the Jewish community in Palestine, educators and public figures debated what the language of instruction should be in schools: French, German, English, Arabic, or Hebrew. At much the same time, east European writers like Semen An-sky and Shmuel Niger were arguing about the proper language for modern secular Jewish literature, Russian or Yiddish.

These linguistic rivalries have been relegated to history, but questions of language, specifically questions about Jewish languages, surface in other contexts. While there are many different definitions of a Jewish language, I am referring to languages that, historically, were spoken and/or written by Jews and were distinct from the languages spoken in the surrounding non-Jewish world. I believe that Jewish languages have a central place in the Jewish Studies curriculum. The question that we should be asking is not whether or not Jewish Studies programs should require students to study a Jewish language, but rather which Jewish languages students should be able to study.

A Jewish Studies curriculum should reflect the broadly interdisciplinary nature of the field, ranging from the analysis of Jewish texts to the diversity of Jewish practices and cultures to the politics and history of premodern and modern Jewish life. Language study has a critical role in the attainment of these learning objectives by cultivating an awareness of the multiplicity of Jewish existence. Jewish communal values and history, religious practices, and textual and oral traditions seep into language and language study. Practically speaking, the language offered by most Jewish Studies programs in North America is Hebrew. But *the* Jewish language should not have to be Hebrew.

Jewish Studies programs need to find ways to cultivate the study of a variety of Jewish languages by offering courses in lesser-taught Jewish languages like Yiddish and Ladino, adding flexibility to major and minor requirements, or sponsoring events that spotlight Jewish languages and multilingualism. Recognizing and teaching Jewish languages is critical for preserving these tongues and for understanding the dynamics of Jewish life, past and present.

Jennifer Hoyer

World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, University of Arkansas

As we create our new Jewish Studies program and minor at the University of Arkansas, we often discuss how best to integrate a language component, because we feel that some amount of language study is essential. Whatever approach a student takes to Jewish Studies, another language besides English will play a role. The deeper a student wishes to go, the more familiarity with languages beyond English is necessary. At the very least, central ideas in Jewish thought are inseparable from Hebrew, while study of Jewish life around the world requires knowledge of other languages, whether for practical purposes, or for historical cultural significance (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, for example, or questions of assimilation, emigration, or repatriation).

We approach the issue of language study with three concerns in particular: staffing; feasibility of completing the minor; and the university's decision to remove language study from its core course requirements. Will requiring language study discourage or even prohibit students from minoring? And if we do require language study, should we require Hebrew? Ancient or modern? What about other current or historically important languages like Latin, Greek, French, German, Russian, Spanish, or Arabic? What about Yiddish or Ladino? We are currently unable to offer Hebrew, Yiddish, or Ladino on a consistent basis;

since we are nonetheless of the opinion that some basic familiarity with Hebrew and Yiddish, at least, is essential, we developed a course called "Introduction to Jewish Languages," in which students can learn the basics (alphabet, significant and frequent phrases, important historical information) of Aramaic, Biblical and Modern Hebrew, and Yiddish. As our program is a minor, there is also some room to encourage students to study another language in more depth.

Joseph Lam

Religious Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

One's answer to this question depends on one's approach to Jewish Studies overall. If one conceives of the field as synonymous with the study of traditional Judaism, with a focus on certain canonical texts (e.g., Tanakh, Talmud), then language study would be necessary only insofar as it enables the reading and interpretation of such texts.

But if one adopts a more expansive view of Jewish Studies, one that has at its heart a process of critical reflection on matters of identity and culture formation, then it is possible to grant language study a role that is more than ancillary. Since language, by nature, encodes culture, the study of language can serve as one of the many sites for this critical cultural reflection. Such a view would imply a broadening of the languages in the curriculum, beyond the traditional focus on Hebrew, to include other languages with cultural significance for Jews throughout history (e.g., Yiddish, Ladino). More importantly, the teaching of these languages would not be restricted to grammar instruction, but would give attention to the interaction between the shape of these languages and the social and historical circumstances of their use.

In a Classical Hebrew course that I developed for the Jewish Studies program at UNC-Chapel Hill, we adopt just such an approach. In addition to presenting the fundamentals of Biblical Hebrew grammar,

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Anita Norich

*English and Judaic Studies,
University of Michigan*

At the risk of seeming terribly old-fashioned or even cantankerous, I would have to answer this question by lamenting that it needs to be asked at all. I know it is a real question and one that—given the state of language instruction and acquisition in the United States—is posed with increasing urgency. It is a sign of the times and not an encouraging one. A liberal arts curriculum that does not have language study at its center makes no sense to me. We spend a lot of time in the academy seeking diversity and attending to difference. How can we hope to do that without teaching the languages in which other cultures flourished and understood themselves? And *'ad kamah ve-kamah* (how much more so) is this true of Jewish Studies. Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, or the languages used by Jews in any of the lands and times of their existence seem to me absolutely essential if we are to know something about the civilizations they created and lived within.

In her story “Envy, or Yiddish in America” Cynthia Ozick reminded us that Elijah the Prophet is not the same as *Elihu hanovi* and Bible Lands is quite different from *eretz yisrael*. There are an infinite number of similar examples. It is not just that one person’s *nakba* (catastrophe) is another’s *milhemet ha-‘azma’ut* (War of Independence), offering antithetical perspectives on the same event, but that even excellent translations have different resonances because the source and target languages are directed toward and understood by distinct audiences. Surely, how we name things matters. To Ozick’s reminder, we might add that *Wissenschaft* means more than “knowledge,” *yiddishkeyt* more than Jewishness, and that *Shoah*, *Khurbn*, and Holocaust are not quite synonyms or

translations. That kind of understanding cannot happen without language study.

Robert Schine

Jewish Studies, Middlebury College

The year was 1923. Hayim Nahman Bialik, then in Berlin, wrote a congratulatory letter to the editors of *Dvir*, a new journal of Jewish Studies that was launched in Berlin and published only in Hebrew. Bialik’s letter was reprinted as the headpiece of the first issue: the founding of a journal of Jewish Studies in Hebrew in the birthplace of modern Jewish Studies was an occasion for celebration—“for reciting the *She-hehiyonu*.” Bialik hoped that Western Jewish scholars were finally recognizing that “translated Judaism,” which he claimed was an invention of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, was misbegotten from the start. Jewish Studies should be transacted only in Hebrew. Judaism is untranslatable.

How distant is Bialik’s vision of such a Hebrew utopia now, and how contrary to the present state of Jewish Studies. I have been at Middlebury College for most of thirty years, hired to teach Jewish Studies and Classical Hebrew, and yet, as at other liberal arts colleges with minor and occasionally major programs in Jewish Studies, a vanishingly small number of students pursue Hebrew study for the purpose of unlocking the literary treasure trove of Jewish tradition. A few want to read the Bible.

I sympathize with Bialik’s motives, if not with his plea for linguistic exclusivity: to read Hebrew texts with students means to escort them behind the veil of translation, to reveal etymology—I recall, for instance, my own thrill as an undergrad at learning that “to exile” connoted “to lay the land bare,” or that the verb system of Classical Hebrew indicated a foreign conception of tense and time. And yet now it is the rare college student who will have similar experiences. The MLA statistics tell the story¹: the study of Hebrew is in decline. In the four years ending in 2013, Biblical Hebrew declined by 8.7% and even Modern Hebrew by 19.4% (!). Over a decade ago, when Peter Cole visited Middlebury to give a course on the medieval poets he was collecting for his anthology *The Dream of the Poem*, four advanced students of Classical Hebrew were eager to meet with him weekly to read the original texts. That clientele no longer exists. Even the famed

University of Wisconsin Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies eliminated its BA program in Biblical Hebrew. To be sure, Middlebury’s summer school in Hebrew is thriving, drawing graduate students, undergraduates, and many professionals from government service, but the college’s regular year-round courses in Modern Hebrew, like those at its sister institutions, do not fill.

Thus, it seems that nearly a century after Bialik’s Ashkenazic-accented “*She-hehiyonu*” fewer students are interested in Classical Hebrew as the language of a long literary tradition. The shrinking number of undergraduates who do study Hebrew enroll in courses in Modern Hebrew, the key to the vital contemporary Israeli scene. Their interest is the Israeli present, not the Jewish literature of the diasporic past. Whereas Bialik sought to sustain the connection between the Hebrew literary past and the vernacular coming alive in his day, it seems to me that present trends will allow that past to recede from the field of vision of a likewise diminishing number of students.

1. David Goldberg et al., *Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2013* (Modern Language Association of America, Web publication February 2015: http://www.mla.org/pdf/2013_enrollment_survey.pdf).

Gilya Schmidt

*Director, Fern and Manfred Steinfeld Program
in Judaic Studies, University of Tennessee*

The study of languages is highly valued at the University of Tennessee, with a large Department of Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures as well as a Department of Classics. However, languages that relate to Jewish Studies are not included in either department. This is most unfortunate, as it is impossible to study a complex civilization like Judaism without knowledge of the requisite languages.

Both Biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew were being taught at this institution before there was a Judaic Studies Program, but in a very idiosyncratic way. Biblical Hebrew was taught as an upper-level companion course and as an overload by the professor who taught Hebrew Bible in the Department of Religious Studies. After the faculty member’s retirement, Biblical Hebrew was not taught for about a decade. In 2012, we were fortunate that the spouse

of a new colleague offered to teach Biblical Hebrew. Religious Studies revamped Biblical Hebrew in line with other language courses (levels I and II) and it now fulfills the Arts and Sciences language requirement.

A Modern Hebrew tape program has existed at the University of Tennessee for more than twenty years. At this university, Modern Hebrew is known as a less commonly taught language and is located in Asian Studies, an interdisciplinary program like Judaic Studies. Students study in the language lab with the assistance of a tutor. Modern Hebrew fulfills the Arts and Sciences language requirement. In 2008 I was able to convince a donor to help fund a real teacher of Modern Hebrew. Now in its sixth year, the uncertainty of future funding necessitates our making conservative promises to potential hires, which in turn inhibits efforts to aggressively grow this course of study.

It is urgent for the Fern and Manfred Steinfeld Program in Judaic Studies, now in its third decade, to secure permanent funding for Hebrew language instruction and to rethink the Judaic Studies

curriculum so that Hebrew will become an integral part of our course of study.

Barry Wimpfheimer

Director, The Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies, Northwestern University

Seven years ago, when colleagues and I sat around a table to discuss Jewish Studies curricular requirements for undergraduates, our discussion was swift and unequivocal: Jewish Studies majors would need to have Hebrew or Yiddish. This consensus reflected my own sense that even in those areas of Jewish Studies in which languages are not absolutely essential for primary research, additional language skills only enhance the work.

Today, as the administrator responsible for running Northwestern's undergraduate program in Jewish Studies, I am not sure I have the luxury of demanding a language requirement that stands for rigor and baseline competence as a researcher. Under attack, the humanities disciplines are

increasingly asked to justify their project through metrics: the number of students enrolled in courses and the number of students who major and minor in a given subject. While Jewish Studies is somewhat cushioned against the threat of departmental closure by our relatively large endowments, this shelter does not guarantee that we will be able to continue to offer low-enrollment specialty courses and that we will be able to replace departing faculty. A couple of recent email exchanges with students have made it clear to me that our language requirement can be prohibitive to some students who would otherwise be willing to commit to the number of courses required of a major.

This pragmatic questioning of the status quo causes me to reflect on the theoretical question from two different angles. First, I've come to realize the extent to which higher education in the United States has been undergoing a significant change with respect to languages. The movement away from core requirements has destroyed the notion of a classical education that supported both the

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study of the humanities in universities and the historical rise of Jewish Studies as a discipline. Second, the changing shape of humanities education is making the choice of a major in Jewish Studies harder than it has been. Perhaps the goal of such a major should not be the production of students capable of doing graduate-level primary research in Jewish Studies (a goal we are proudly achieving for our small cadre of majors), but of producing students who have honed critical thinking and writing skills while considering the subsection of the humanities that addresses things Jews have done?

Ed Wright

Director, Arizona Center for Judaic Studies, University of Arizona

In recent years students and parents have demanded that undergraduate programs produce graduates who can earn a “decent living.” Enrollments in STEM majors (science, technology, engineering, math) have exploded. These majors have reduced or altogether

eliminated the foreign language requirement. This trend is understandable amidst the quest for a more efficient undergraduate experience, but it is also regrettable because language is how humans communicate, and people speak a plethora of languages. Mastery of a foreign language takes considerable time and effort, but it pays a tremendous dividend: it enables us to communicate with people from different cultures. Today’s world is diverse and interdependent, so reduced foreign language requirements ultimately will limit our students’ chances to have an impact on and to succeed in the global marketplace.

Foreign language competence is essential to student success in Jewish Studies because it enables them to engage with aspects of Jewish civilizations across vast linguistic boundaries. In a graduate seminar at the Hebrew University years ago, I witnessed a telling exchange between the professor and a student. The professor had assigned readings in a few languages, and one student noted that he could read only Hebrew and English. The professor’s response was direct and firm: “What, you think Jewish civilization

exists only in Hebrew and English? How do you expect to engage with the ideas of Jews who speak other languages?” Foreign language competence enables us to examine events and ideas through others’ eyes, an absolutely essential skill in today’s world.

Jewish Studies also has a temporal dimension, reaching back over three thousand years. Jews at various times used Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, Ladino, Yiddish, and other languages. Inscriptions, administrative records, and vast literary works reveal aspects of Jewish life from biblical to modern times. Competence in foreign languages pertinent to Jewish Studies enables us to study the literary records of past generations. In a very real sense, we preserve their memory as we understand how they expressed their unique take on Judaic culture.

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